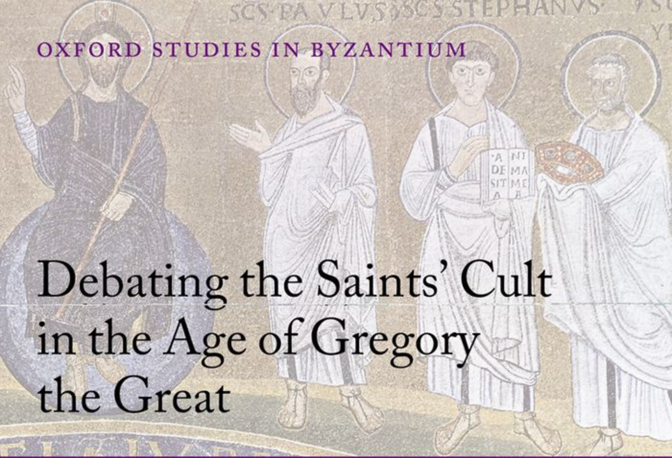
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Debating the Saints' Cult in the Age of Gregory the Great

MATTHEW DAL SANTO

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Debating the Saints' Cult in the Age of Gregory the Great

Oxford Studies in Byzantium

MATTHEW DAL SANTO

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For my wife and parents

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appears in a fuller version in the *Journal of Late Antiquity* 4 (2011) 31–54. The conclusion builds on my article published in *Age of Saints? Conflict, Power and Dissent in Early Medieval Christianity* (Leiden: Brill, 2011).

MJD

June 2011
Canberra, Australia

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Abbreviations

CCG	*Corpus Christianorum series Greca*
CCL	*Corpus Christianorum series Latina*
CSEL	*Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum*
CSCO	*Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium*
PG	*Patrologia Graeca*
PL	*Patrologia Latina*
PO	*Patrologia Orientalis*
SC	*Sources Chrétiennes*
Settimane	*Settimane di studio del Centro italiano di studi sull'alto Medioevo*
EMC=CV	*Échos du Monde Classique: Classical Views* (Classical Association of Canada)
FGrHist	F. Jacoby, *Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker,* ed. F. Jacoby (1923–56)
G&R	*Greece and Rome, NS*
GHI	*Greek Historical Inscriptions,* ed. Todd
GRBS	*Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies*
Harv. Stud.	*Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*
ICS	*Illinois Classical Studies*
IG	*Inscriptiones Graecae*
JbZMusMainz	*Jahrbuch des Römisch-Germanischen Zentralmuseums, Mainz*
JHS	*Journal of Hellenic Studies*
LEC	*Les Études classiques*
LSJ	Liddell and Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 9th edn. with rev. suppl.
MH	*Museum Helveticum*
ML	R. Meiggs and D. Lewis, *A Selection of Greek Historical Inscriptions to the End of the Fifth Century* BC (rev. edn., 1988).
NC	*Numismatic Chronicle*
PCPS	*Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society*

Philol.	*Philologus*
PLLS	*Papers of the Leeds International Latin Seminar*
PP	*La parola del passato*
QS	*Quaderni di Storia*
RE	A. Pauly, G. Wissowa, and W. Kroll, *Real-Encylcopädie d. klassischen Altertumswissenschaft* (1893-)
REA	*Revue des études anciennes*
REG	*Revue des études grecques*
RhM	*Rheinsiches Museum*
SCI	*Scripta Classica Israelica*
SEG	*Supplementum epigraphicum Graecum* (1923-)
SO	*Symbolae Osloenses: Norwegian Journal of Greek and Latin Studies*
TAPA	*Transactions of the American Philological Association*
YClS	*Yale Classical Studies*
ZPE	*Zeitscrhift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik*

Introduction

Gregory the Great and the saints' cult in late antiquity

Around the year 700 Anastasius of Sinai, one of the most venerable ascetics of his age, put down in writing his belief that God had created human beings out of the four elements—air, water, fire, and earth.[1] So much had been confirmed by his own observations during a lifetime's travel across many of the territories of the old Roman Near East:

> I went not long ago to the Dead Sea [. . .] where the air is deadly, illness-laden, burning and liable to generate corruption, just like the air in Cyprus. I found there that all their captives and slaves who were most proficient in the cultivating of the fields were Cypriot; and since I was amazed and desired to know the cause of this, they who were in charge replied that the air of this place was not different from the air of Cyprus. They also said that often those captives sent there from other regions died within a short space of time.[2]

Because the balance between the four elements played an important role in human health, Anastasius was not embarrassed (unlike other but by no means all Christians of his age) to record his confidence in the skills of contemporary practitioners of the medical profession. On the contrary, it was Anastasius's firm belief that Hippocratic remedies could be successfully applied to many of the sufferers who sought relief at the saints' shrines that lay scattered across the Mediterranean world. The truth of this had been confirmed on a visit to a shrine on Cyprus dedicated to St Epiphanius. Anastasius wrote:

---

[1] In 700 Anastasius may have been over one hundred years old. For what is known of his biography, see Haldon (1992).

[2] Anastasius of Sinai, *Questions and Answers = Anastasii Sinaitae: Quaestiones et responsiones*, M. Richard and J. A. Munitiz (eds.), CCSG 59, 28.16: *Καὶ γοῦν πρὸ ὁλίγων χρόνων παραγενόμενος εἰς τὴν Θάλασσαν τὴν Νεκρὰν* [. . .], *ἔνθα χαλεποί τινες καὶ φθοροποιοὶ και καυσώδεις καὶ σηπτικοὶ καθ᾽ ὁποιότητα Κύπρου τυγχάνουσιν οἱ ἁέρες, εὗρον πάντας τοὺς αἰχμαλώτους Κυπρίους τυγχάνοντας τῶν κατασπορῶν τοῦ δημοσίου· κἀμοῦ θαυμάσαντος καὶ τὴν αἰτίαν ἐρωτήσαντος, οἱ τὰ αὐτόθι διοικοῦντες ταύτην πρός με τὴν ἀπόκρισιν δέδωκαν, ὅτι οὐ προσδέχονται οἱ ἐνταῦθα ἀέρες ἕτερα σώματα, εἰ μὴ τὰ ἀπὸ Κύπρου· καὶ γὰρ φησι πολλάκις πεμφθέντων ὧδε ἐκ διαφόρων χωρῶν αἰχμαλώτων, ἐντὸς ὁλίγου χρόνου ἐφθάπησαν καὶ ἀπέθανον.*

> A little before the capture of Cyprus, a certain philosopher skilled in medicine (*τις φιλόσοφος καὶ ἰατροσοφιστὴς*) came to the shrine of Saint Epiphanius and saw the multitude of sick people. He said that many could be cured with the help of God through a correct diet, purgations and the letting of blood. When this was done by order of the archbishop, it healed many.[3]

Anastasius's pointed attribution of these healings not to the ministrations of Epiphanius, the shrine's sainted patron, but to 'secular' physicians has raised the eyebrows of modern scholars before.[4]

For Anastasius's accommodating attitude stands in marked contrast to the anti-Hippocratic, 'faith-based' pronouncements on healing which the partisans of saints' shrines often offered at this time. Not so far from Sinai, Sophronius, later patriarch of Jerusalem, shrilly decried the kind of remedies Anastasius so warmly embraced.[5] Sophronius was thoroughly unconvinced of the Hippocratic treatments he received for an eye problem he developed after his arrival in Egypt *circa* 610. He inveighed in particular against a diagnosis that saw his malady as the harmful result of a change in the quality of the air.[6] When the corresponding treatment proved ineffective, the physicians then explained the disease as an imbalance in his body's humours. But Sophronius could only look with scorn on such changing diagnoses.[7] Ultimately deemed beyond cure, Sophronius did what we intuitively imagine any early Byzantine would have done: he sought out the shrine of some famous saints, in this case, Sts Cyrus and John whose complex stood on the bay at Aboukir outside Alexandria. Thanks to the saints' ministrations, he was healed. But Sophronius lost none of his disdain for the physicians and their 'climates' and 'humours'. Indeed, he later satirized the unsuccessful efforts of Gesius, a famous Alexandrian doctor, to cure himself of a disorder in his back, neck, and shoulders. His attempted remedies rehearse the repertoire of contemporary Hippocratic medicine, and the story concludes with Sophronius proving that Cyrus and John alone could dispense true healing.[8] When on another occasion the shrine attendants sent for a physician to treat a man who had cut his throat in an attempted suicide, Sophronius, with evident satisfaction, reported that the saints castigated them for their temerity.[9]

---

[3] Anastasius of Sinai, *Qu. Ans.* = CCSG 59, 26.4: *Καὶ γοῦν πρὸ ὀλίγου χρόνου τῆς ἁλώσεως Κύπρου παραγενάμενός τις φιλόσοφος καὶ ἰατροσοφιστὴς ἐν τῷ μαρτυρίῳ τοῦ ἁγίου Ἐπιφανίου, καὶ θεωρήσας τὸ πλῆθος τῶν πασχόντων, ἔλεγε δύνασθαι τῇ βοηθείᾳ τοῦ θεοῦ τινὰς ἐξ αὐτῶν διὰ διάτης τινὸς καὶ διὰ ῥινῶν καθαρσίων και ἀφαιμάξεων ἰάσασθαι: καὶ δὴ κατὰ κέλευσιν τοῦ ἀρχιεπισκόπου ἐπιχειρήσας, τοὺς πλείστους ἰάσατο*. For the capture of Cyprus by the Arabs in 649, see Cameron (1992*b*).

[4] Dagron (1992) 62 col. 1, (1993) 87–9; and Déroche (1993*a*) 106. See more generally Dagron (1981*a*).

[5] For Sophronius, as for many other figures who feature in this study, Berardino (2006) is a useful resource.

[6] Sophronius of Jerusalem, *CyrJoh* 70 = Fernandez-Marcos, *Thaumata*, 70.44–7. A French translation of all the miracles can be found in J. Gascou, *Sophrone de Jérusalem: Miracles des saints Cyr et Jean* (Paris, 2006).

The diagnoses that the doctors applied to Sophronius's own eyes reflect the medical remedies with which Anastasius of Sinai was familiar and which he recommended so serenely in his own writings. Anastasius followed the same essentially Hippocratic and empirical rationale to explain why children sometimes died young, why some women were barren, why plague struck some cities but not others, and even why some people were more disposed to certain moral failings than others.[10] The cause lay generally in the laws of nature and the properties that governed the elements from which man was made. God the Creator had instilled certain properties in the various elements and assigned the laws by which they would operate; and, having established the physical laws of his Creation, God generally refrained from interfering with them.[11] This had certain consequences for Anastasius's theory of miracles. In Anastasius's view, there was no question that miracles could in theory take place; but if they did, they were relatively rare 'additions and subtractions' to and from the natural order and, in the case of illness, a rationalistic remedy was normally to be preferred whenever possible:

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[7] Sophronius of Jerusalem, *CyrJoh* 70 = Fernandez-Marcos, *Thaumata*, 70.48–50.

[8] Sophronius of Jerusalem, *CyrJoh* 30 = Fernandez-Marcos, *Thaumata*, 30.49–53.

[9] Nevertheless, Sophronius sometimes adopted quasi-medical language to account for the illnesses he observed. See *CyrJoh* 8 in Fernandez-Marcos, *Thaumata*, 8.61–3; and Duffy (1984*a*) esp. 23–4. Montserrat notes that the remedies the saints prescribe occasionally imitate Hippocratic practice: Montserrat (2005) 235–7. For an interpretation of Sophronius's attitude towards Hippocratic medicine that is more accommodating of that profession's claims, see Booth (2009).

[10] Anastasius of Sinai, *Qu. Ans.* 28; 81; 66; 27.

[11] See especially Anastasius's ambivalence towards miracles in *Qu. Ans.* 62: it was not miracles, but a righteous way of life that made a saint. Sorcerers were equally able to perform 'wonders'. Cf. Auzépy (1995) 36–7.

> [. . .] God has given men the knowledge of medicine, and has prepared herbs and all kinds of things suitable for healing, so that, I believe, in God's providence, doctors often save man from death [. . .]. By every means, wise slave-traders of old besought learned philosophers and medical teachers to explain to them as accurately as possible what were the qualities of the air and elements of every land [. . .].[12]

Anastasius's aetiology thus neatly reversed the paradigm Sophronius constructed in his record of the miracles performed by Sts Cyrus and John, wherein those who sought Hippocratic medicine were consistently viewed as unwise, while the truly wise were the pious who sought healing from the saints. In other collections of saintly miracles from the period under review in this study a more conciliatory attitude towards Hippocratic medicine can sometimes be found.[13] Yet however much contemporaries had in practice recourse to both saintly and other more mundane forms of healing,[14] Anastasius of Sinai's account of the activities of the wise physician-philosopher who successfully applied the skills of his profession at the shrine of St Epiphanius stands out from the corpus of early Byzantine literature connected with the saints' cult as strikingly and almost uniquely rationalistic in tone. But was Anastasius really alone in giving the saints a back seat in this way?

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[12] Anastasius of Sinai, *Qu. Ans.* = CCSG 59, 28.15: [. . .] ὁ θεὸς τὴν ἰατρικὴν ἐπιστήμην τοὺς ἀνθρώπους ἐσόφισε καὶ τὰς βοτάνας καὶ τὰ εἴδη πάντα θεραπευτικὰ προηυτρέπισεν, ὅθεν καθάπερ ἔγωγε ὂιμαι, καὶ σῴζουσι πολλάκις θεοῦ προνοίᾳ οἱ ἰατροὶ ἐκ θανάτου ἄνθρωπον [. . .]. Ἀμέλει γοῦν οἱ τῶν ἀρχαίων σωματεμπόρων ἐπιστήμονες ἐπυνθάνοντο τοὺς φιλοσόφους καὶ ἰατροσοφιστῶν τοὺς ἐπιστήμονας εἰς ἀκρίβειαν αὐτοῖς διαγγέλλειν τὰς ποιότητας τῶν ἀέρων καὶ τῶν στοιχείων τῶν χωρῶν [. . .].

[13] In the late sixth-century *Miracles of Cosmas and Damian*, for instance, Hippocratic doctors only appear once as outright sceptics of the saints' miraculous powers: see *CosDam* 28 in Deubner, *Kosmas*, 171; Festugière, *Collections*, 167–8. Instead of dwelling on hostility between the saints and Constantinople's Hippocratic doctors, the anonymous authors of *Cosmas and Damian* prefer simply to present the saints as the 'true' doctors of the imperial city, a theme considerably aided by the saints' reputation for having been doctors in this life: Wittmann (1967) 26; Csepregi (2002); and now Booth (2011). For competition between rationalist and miraculous aetiologies in this period, see Haldon (1997*a*).

[14] See Horden (1982) and (1985).

Part of our surprise when we encounter a voice like Anastasius's from late antiquity derives from the abundant evidence, literary and archaeological, for the widespread patronage of saints' shrines across the Mediterranean world that has come down to us from the period.[15] But it is also intimately bound up with the way that evidence has been interpreted and the signal importance which the historiography of late antiquity has attributed to the Christian cult of saints. Since its appearance in 1971, Peter Brown's brilliant and deservedly famous article on the Christian holy man or saint in late antiquity has animated a major part of the study of the religious and cultural history of the Mediterranean world between *circa* 300 and 800.[16] A social figure who apparently aroused the admiration of his peers, the late antique Christian holy man revealed, in Brown's view, the secrets of the society that nursed him.[17] The choice then made to invest human beings (and, particularly, men) with special sacred authority, which Brown evoked with such sensitive artistry in his *World of Late Antiquity*, transformed modern interpretations of the religious landscape of the late ancient world.[18] For nearly four decades Brown's thesis that the rise of the holy man in the later Roman Empire—and particularly the Christian monk or ascetic from the middle of the fourth century—reflected a watershed in religious history, that the veneration of living human beings constituted a realignment of the meaning of sanctity ('the holy' in Brown's terminology) and of access to the power and social authority which such sanctity conferred, has nourished a rich literature on the Christian saints' cult in late antiquity. For many historians, as for Brown himself, the Christian saint—more especially, perhaps, the willingness of late antique persons to *believe* in the Christian saint—has represented the key to understanding the nature of human life in the late Roman

---

[15] For an exemplary study of the archaeological evidence, see Papaconstantinou (2001).

[16] Brown (1971*a*); repr. in idem (1982) 103–52.

[17] Brown (1971*a*) in idem (1982) 106–7: 'In studying both the most admired and the most detested figures in any society we can see, as seldom through other evidence, the nature of the average man's hopes for himself. It is for the historian, therefore, to analyse this image as a product of the society around the holy man. Instead of retailing the image of the holy man as sufficient in itself to explain his appeal to the average late Roman, we should use the image like a mirror, to catch, from a surprising angle, another glimpse of the average late Roman.'

[18] Brown (1971*b*) 52. On the connection between this work and the 'Holy Man' article, see Brown (1998) 355.

Mediterranean and its successor states, whether on an individual or a collective level. As Brown put it succinctly, '[t]he rise of the holy man is the *Leitmotiv* of the religious revolution of late antiquity'.[19]

It is well known that Brown's approach challenged a tradition of interpreting the very visible role which saints' cults played in the rise of Christianity in the Roman Empire that reached back to Gibbon and the rationalist prejudices of Enlightenment Europe and beyond. This tradition was essentially negative and dismissive. Far from representing the vulgarization of classical Greco-Roman religious culture through the infiltration of popular superstition, however, Brown argued that the rise of the holy man and Christian saints' cult displayed remarkable continuities with many of the long-standing values the Mediterranean world's social elite (notably an emphasis on living *paideia*) as well as striking parallels with the shifts taking place in the wider religious mood of late antiquity even outside the confines of the Christian church (especially the intense Neoplatonist search for personal communion with the One).[20] The rise of the saints' cult was radical and far-reaching, and Christianity did in a sense turn the Roman religious world 'upside-down',[21] but not in a way that implied the superior 'rationality' or sophistication of the classical over the Christian late antique, nor the disappearance with Christianity's rise to predominance of many patterns of behaviour traditional to Mediterranean societies. The holy man could be modelled on the late Roman patron and his function in society explained by analogy with the political transformations taking place in the Empire from the time of the third century, particularly the hierarchical system of government established by Diocletian.[22] The saints could be understood as Christ-bearing figures, missionaries and 'negotiators of the demise of the ancient gods' (often on the latter's own terms).[23] And the devotion they stirred in men and women's hearts has been viewed as the embodiment of a distinctly late antique ideal of friendship.[24] Despite the resistance of a few sceptics,[25] it is difficult now to conceive of late antiquity without reference to the rise of the holy man, the veneration of deceased saints or the social influence of Christian monasticism—although we have learnt that these are not by any means all the same thing; indeed, that each one of these components of the 'saints' cult' could mean different things in different parts of the late antique and early medieval world at different times.[26]

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[19] Brown (1971*a*) in idem (1982) 148. There are numerous appraisals. See especially the range of articles presented by leading historians and classicists in Howard-Johnston and Hayward (eds.) (1999).

[20] For the saints' cult and *paideia*, see Brown (1983); on the dynamics of the 'new religious mood', see Brown (1971*b*) 49–59.

[21] Note especially the role attributed to the saints' cult in breaking down the long-standing Roman prohibition against the presence of the dead in the ancient city, and, separately, its role in 'humanizing' the sacred landscape of the countryside: Peter Brown (1981).

[22] Brown (1978), esp. 58–9; also Brown (1971*a*) *passim*.

[23] Brown (1995) 64 ff.

Even when his confidence in the social functionalist models he applied to the study of religious history was challenged, Brown reserved a privileged place for the rise of the Christian saint or holy man in the mutual histories of the Christian church and Mediterranean society in late antiquity. Commenting on the alarming tendency for communities to abandon the saints (and the Christian church) in moments of crisis, Brown noted,

> how little [. . .] of the public space of late Roman society had come to be occupied by Christian holy persons. The solid gold of demonstrative Christian sanctity was spectacular; but it circulated in strictly delimited channels, in what had remained, to an overwhelming extent, a supernatural 'subsistence economy', accustomed to handling life's doubts and cares according to more old-fashioned and low-key methods.[27]

When he reviewed the copious Lives of the saints handed down to posterity from the late Roman and early medieval periods, Brown admitted that 'the society that turned to Christian holy persons was more niggardly than our hagiographic sources might lead us, at first sight, to suppose, in lavishing credulity upon them'.[28] The holy men of late antiquity were, then, but one part of a more variegated web that interwove Christianity, traditional Mediterranean religion, and complex social networks. But there is a sense in which, according to Brown's view, however hard the Christian saints (and their hagiographers) had to work to earn the admiration of their contemporaries, they always got there in the end. It is in this spirit that Brown concluded his *retractio* in *Authority and the Sacred*, affirming that '[b]y playing a role in the emergence of an imaginative model of the world that had a place for such wide-arching prayers, the Christian saints in late antiquity helped to make Christianity at last, for a short moment, before the rise of Islam, the one truly universal religion of much of Europe and the Middle East'.[29] And later: 'The cult of the saints may mean nothing to us. But we have to understand how much it did mean, and had meant for so long, to late antique Christians. It was part of the religious common sense of the age'.[30] But to what extent is this really true?

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[24] Brown (1981) 50–68.

[25] Among critiques, see Treadgold (1994); Giardini (1999); and more lately, Ward-Perkins (2005) 3–4.

[26] See here the astute comments of Van Dam (1993) 4–7 with bibliography; also Brown (2000*b*).

[27] Brown (1995) 72.

[28] Brown (1995) 73. Compare Augustine of Hippo's anxieties in this regard in Brown (2000*a*).

This study revisits the Christian saints' apparently unstoppable and meteoric rise in significance in the Mediterranean world between 300 and 700, but with a focus on the end rather than the beginning of this period, when, if anything, the public standing of the saints' cult had been consolidated. Focusing on the later sixth and seventh centuries, it re-examines some of the period's the hagiographical sources to take account of the significant and too often overlooked expressions of resistance to it that were voiced during this period.[31] This is not an entirely untrodden path. Gilbert Dagron has highlighted the doubt and scepticism that attended the cult of saints in late antique and medieval society: 'Les Byzantins', Dagron asked in a seminal discussion, 'croyaient-ils à tous ces saints qui avaient pris possession [. . .] de l'espace cultuel, du calendrier liturgique, des livres, des images, des imaginations?' His answer was clearly no, '[c]ar les Byzantins n'oubliaient pas [. . .] de quelle stratégie de pouvoir et de quels enjeux économiques l'hagiographie était l'instrument.'[32] The general validity of the veneration of the saints and their relics has emerged in recent years as less a consensus among late antique and early medieval

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[29] Brown (1995) 78.

[30] Brown (2003) 19. See also idem (2000*b*).

[31] For a definition of hagiography, see van Uytfanghe (1993) esp. 146: 'L'hagiographie comme telle n'est pas [. . .] un genre littéraire'. Uytfanghe offers instead the term 'discours hagiographique' as an alternative that better expresses the variety of forms found in hagiographical literature. It is worthwhile recalling Delehaye's classic definition, whereby hagiography can be considered 'tout document écrit inspiré par le culte des saints, et destiné à le promouvoir': Delehaye (1955) 2.

[32] Dagron (1992) at 59; also idem (1981*a*). Similar themes feature in Auzépy (1995).

Christians than once acknowledged. In the early fifth century, for example, Vigilantius of Calagurris apparently opposed the cult of relics and even monasticism *in toto*.[33] From a different but surely related perspective, the polemical function of many saints' Lives has been widely and repeatedly underlined; it is clear that many individual cults began life passionately contested and many others simply failed to take root.[34] Nonetheless, the scepticism or doubt with which late antique audiences may have greeted the claims of hagiographers on behalf of their sainted subjects remains a field largely overlooked by historians of the period who still, by and large, follow a 'triumphalist' model of the role of the Christian saints in late antique society.

For the purposes of this study, we may define scepticism as the inclination to question the truth or soundness of given reports of saintly activity, especially miracles, on the grounds of their improbability for whatever reason.[35] I do not imply any connection between the attitudes investigated in this study and Scepticism (ancient or modern) as an approach to philosophy.[36] This is true even if, in antiquity, sceptical Pyrrhonism was occasionally associated with the practice of medicine based on the principles of empirical observation (as opposed to more abstract theorizing), and despite the fact that rationalist empiricism forms (as it does) a frequent standpoint from which criticism of the saints' miracles was made in early Byzantium, as we shall see. A connection between Scepticism and an empiricist approach to medicine may have existed in the third century, but there is no evidence that it still did so in the sixth.[37] Rather, in dealing with the kind of scepticism preserved in sixth- and seventh-century hagiography, we have ultimately to deal with the question of how we construe the nature and response of the audiences of Christian hagiography in this period.[38] It is often simply assumed that the audiences of early Byzantine saints' Lives and miracle collection subscribed to the world view of such texts' authors. Yet the texts themselves suggest the auditors of the saints' alleged miracles were a critical body and we should be cautious of attributing widespread credulity to the claims of hagiographers on the part of their intended audiences. Indeed, when we look closely at saints' Lives and miracles collections, doubt and even hostility towards the saints' miracles is almost symptomatic of those texts that record the activity of saints—especially those from 'beyond the grave'.

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[33] See above all Hunter (1999); and Gillian Clark (1999); also Piétri (1991). In the ninth-century west, Bishop Claudius of Turin reiterated Vigilantius's rejection of the saints and their miracles: Sansterre (1999). See also van Uytfanghe (1981); idem (1989). We may leave aside the alleged attacks on saints' relics at Constantinople by the Isaurian emperors of the eighth century: Wortley (1982).

[34] See esp. Hayward (1999). On the *Life of Antony* (the founding text in many ways of late antique hagiography), see Brakke (1998) 201–65.

[35] I have adapted this definition from the *Australian Concise Oxford Dictionary*, 3rd edn. (Oxford, 1997).

[36] On the latter two, see Bett (1987); and Stough (1969). See also the classic study in Popkin (1979).

[37] Stough (1969) 11–14 on Sextus Empiricus (*fl. c.* AD 150–250).

With this in view, the present study aims to trace a debate concerning the saints and their miracles which, if it did not rage across the Christian world, certainly simmered in the minds of many from its first clear appearance at Constantinople during the last quarter of the sixth century, until its resolution with the development of various hagiological 'orthodoxies' between Rome and Baghdad by the late 790s. The texts under discussion in this study mostly derive from Italy and the eastern Mediterranean from the second half of the sixth down to the later seventh centuries. The study begins with a detailed, contextual investigation of an important hagiographical text from early Byzantine Italy—the *Dialogues on the Miracles of the Italian Fathers* by Gregory the Great (pope, 590–604).[39] Composed at Rome between July 593 and November 594 (dates which a detailed study of the text's internal evidence supports),[40] Gregory's *Dialogues* occupy a special position in the history of Latin hagiography, containing not only the Life of St Benedict (the second dialogue) but also the most significant discussion of 'Purgatory' from the Latin patristic period.[41] For reasons that will be given below, this investigation into Gregory's *Dialogues* takes its primary point of reference from a still relatively little known treatise from late sixth-century Constantinople, the presbyter Eustratius's († after 602) *On the State of Souls after Death*.[42] As Gilbert Dagron has demonstrated, this text is of crucial importance for re-adjusting our expectations regarding the universality of subscription to the saints' cult in early Byzantium.[43]

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[38] Some recent observations made in the context of early Christian pilgrimage may be instructive. See Elsner (2005) 433.

[39] References to the *Dialogues* refer to the critical edition: *Grégoire le Grand: Dialogues*, ed. A. de Vogüé, trans. P. Antin, three volumes, SC 251, 260, 265 (Paris, 1978–80). Citations in English are taken from the translation by O. J. Zimmerman, *Saint Gregory the Great: Dialogues*, The Fathers of the Church (Washington, DC, 1959), which I have adapted. I do not accept the conclusions of Francis Clark's recent attempts to discredit Gregory's authorship of the *Dialogues*: see Dal Santo (2010) and Meyvaert (2004). I thank Prof. Meyvaert for kindly supplying me with a copy of his article.

[40] See de Vogüé (1978) = SC 251:24–9. It has been argued that the latter part of the text (i.e. the fourth dialogue) was added, by Gregory himself, at a later date closer to 600: Pricoco and Simonetti (2005) xxvii–xxviii. But this hypothesis is not mandated by a close study, which rather underscores the organic unity of Gregory's text. See the second chapter of this study.

Most traditional studies have presented the *Dialogues* as an unproblematic contribution to the late antique saints' cult. This study argues, however, that Gregory's text was not merely intended to add to the saints' cult, but to reflect discursively upon it and on its ramifications for corollary aspects of Christian belief and practice. Gregory meant to offer a gloss on why and how the saints should be venerated, one that responded to contemporary anxieties and uncertainties on both of these fronts which were clearly articulated and rebutted (not necessarily effectively) at Constantinople.[44] Gregory offered a strong defence of the relationship between God and the saints, one that seemingly reflected genuine disquiet about the legitimacy of saintly veneration and the precise nature of the operation of saintly miracles. It will be argued that these concerns dovetail compellingly with explicit questioning of the saints' cult at Constantinople and the assertion there of the implausibility of the saints' activity *post mortem*, one which a certain revival of Aristotelian psychology may have propelled.

The second chapter then addresses the way these attacks on the verisimilitude of the saints' imagined functions encouraged the defenders of the saints' cult to engage with the Christian theory of the afterlife more generally. The increasing effort, visible in Latin and Greek authors from the end of the sixth century, to offer a coherent account of the soul's fate before the Resurrection and Final Judgement can be seen as stemming from a concern among church leaders to develop an eschatological meta-structure that fully integrated the implications of saintly veneration in order to render this practice impervious to sceptical ridicule or attack. While Thomas Noble is right to point out that Gregory the Great never presented himself as an intellectual, this chapter will argue that he, like other defenders of the saints' miracles in early Byzantium, nevertheless engaged at close quarters with a range of philosophical positions—including Aristotelianism—that appeared to curtail drastically the saints' activity beyond the grave.[45] Indeed, it is Aristotle not Hippocrates who will emerge as the principal foil of the saints' cult in this chapter and, to a large extent, this study more generally.

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[41] Both were crucial for later developments in medieval doctrine and practice. On purgatory, see Le Goff (1980), esp. 121–31. For an indication of the popularity of the *Dialogues* in the Latin middle ages, see Dufner (1968) and now Bremmer, Dekker, and Johnson (2001).

[42] The recently published critical edition is *Eustratii Presbyteri Constantinopolitani De statu animarum post mortem*, P. van Deun (ed.), Corpus Christianorum Series Graeca 60 (Leuven, 2006). The Greek text with a facing Latin translation can also be found in L. Allatius, *De Utriusque Ecclesiae Occidentalis atque Orientalis Perpetua in Dogmate Consensu* (Rome, 1655), pp. 336–580. The Latin is reprinted in J.-P. Migne, *Theologia Cursus Completus* 18 (Paris, 1841), cols. 465–514. For the most comprehensive study to date, see Constas (2002).

[43] Dagron (1992).

[44] For the ongoing debate at Constantinople, see Dal Santo (2011*b*) and (2011*c*). On the correct name of Gregory's text as the *De Miraculis patrum italicorum*, see Cracco (1977).

The third chapter returns to the original early Byzantine controversy over the saints' *post-mortem* miracles, examining a selection of Greek hagiographical literature from the later sixth and seventh centuries. It argues that the hagiological and eschatological issues addressed in Gregory and Eustratius's texts are also reflected in hagiographers' representations of the saints' activity at a range of early Byzantine cult centres from across the empire's eastern provinces from Thessalonica to Antioch and Alexandria, including the anonymous *Miracles of Cosmas and Damian*, Sophronius of Jerusalem's *Miracles of Cyrus and John*, John of Thessalonica's *Miracles of Demetrius*, and the anonymous *Miracles of St Symeon the Younger*. The chapter reiterates the debated nature of saintly miracles in early Byzantine society, with a particular focus on the period between *circa* 575 and *circa* 625. Two mid-century Lives, that of the Anatolian monk and bishop Theodore of Sykeon and Leontius of Neapolis's *Life of John the Almsgiver*, also furnish important evidence.

The final chapter shifts focus from the early Byzantine debate to the growth of a differently calibrated hagiology in the Syriac-speaking Church of the East. It traces the origins of the official promulgation under the eighth-century Catholicos-Patriarch Timothy I of Baghdad (780–823) of a doctrine of 'soul sleep' that included the *post-mortem* inactivity of the saints' souls prior to the Resurrection. Although this process largely took place outside the empire's frontiers, I shall argue that the hagiology that emerged in the East Syrian Church was comparable to the vision of the saints rebutted at Rome and Constantinople. The chapter then explores why this more 'minimalist' view of the saints' ministrations *post mortem* was not equally problematic in the East Syriac tradition. The chapter also points to hesitation towards saintly veneration in late eighth-century Abbasid Iraq.

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[45] See Noble (2004) esp. 182–7.

Of course, the study of late antique hagiography presented here has been shaped by many earlier studies, particularly those concerning the literary conventions of saintly literature.[46] Constantly reiterated *topoi* may suggest an underlying generic unity among hagiographical texts, but this is often a façade; each needs to be carefully considered in the historical circumstances that surrounded its production.[47] Hagiographers frequently invoked literary convention to dispel doubt and opposition to their project of canonizing a controversial figure or cult.[48]

Finally, a word should perhaps be offered on the inclusion in a series on Byzantium of a study that devotes so much space to the writings of a Roman pontiff. Certainly, Pope Gregory I, 'the Great', needs no introduction. Gregory is among the best known figures of the second half of the sixth century and exerted a decisive influence over the Latin middle ages, particularly. Unusually if not uniquely among Roman pontiffs, Gregory also secured for himself a lasting, favourable memory in the eastern churches.[49] Gregory's famous *Rule of Pastoral Care* was translated into Greek during his lifetime at the command of the emperor (although the translation has not survived),[50] and during the eighth century, Pope Zacharias (741–52), last of the so-called 'Greek popes', himself translated the *Dialogues* into Greek.[51] Thanks to this translation, Gregory succeeded in attaining a certain degree of fame in the medieval Greek church and segments from Zacharias's version of the *Dialogues* were regularly incorporated into Greek collections of tales concerning the afterlife.[52] What deserves to be emphasized against allegations of the text's lack of sophistication is that it is on the foundation of the *Dialogues*, rather than any of his other writings, that Gregory's renown in Greek was built and that he earned his common Greek epithet, Gregory 'the Dialogist'.

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[46] For a stimulating discussion, see esp. Cameron (1991*a*).

[47] Smith (1992) at 75.

[48] For western examples, see Fouracre (1990).

[49] Delahaye (1904); Halkin (1955); and Dagens (1981) 248.

[50] Lizzi (1991).

[51] Dal Santo (2008). On these 'Greek popes', Ekonomou (2007) is an interesting but not always impartial account. On Zacharias, see also Haldon and Ward-Perkins (1999).

Of comparable significance for Gregory's memory in the Greek church was the esteem in which a number of eastern visitors to Rome in the years immediately following his death came to hold him, among them two undisputedly 'early Byzantine' churchmen, John Moschus and his friend Sophronius (the latter being the defender of the honour of Sts Cyrus and John and future patriarch of Jerusalem with which this introduction began).[53] Gregory's enthusiasm for asceticism seems to have condemned him to a period of posthumous opprobrium among his Roman *confrères* at the Lateran.[54] Yet stories of Gregory's charity and humility commended him warmly to the ascetically minded easterners who arrived at Rome in search of refuge (and patronage) amidst the confusion caused by the Persian invasion of the empire's near eastern provinces; the links between Moschus and the surviving circle of Gregory's supporters in seventh-century Rome thus appear to have been very close.[55] Indeed, Alan Thacker has shown that Moschus's stories concerning Gregory (subsequently translated into both Georgian and Arabic) must derive from oral conversations between Moschus and his group of easterners, on the one hand, and Gregory's friends at Rome, on the other. Moreover, the stories which Moschus's circle conserved about Gregory (one clearly reflects a story also preserved by Gregory himself in the *Dialogues*) provide important affirmative evidence in the recently renewed discussion concerning Gregory's authorship of the *Dialogues*.[56] For both of these reasons, Gregory was a thoroughly 'Byzantine' pope.

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[52] See Baun (2007) 121, 124.

[53] On Moschus and Sophronius, see Chadwick(1974); and Booth (2008).

[54] See the excellent study by Llewellyn (1974); and note Leyser (2000*a*) 143: 'A person of relentless "moral seriousness" Gregory was, to many, an infuriating and divisive figure.'

[55] Thacker (1998); also Coates-Stephens (2007). For eastern monasticism (Greek and Syriac) at Rome from the seventh century, see Sansterre (1980) and (1988) and Booth (2008).

[56] For doubts about a Gregorian authorship, see Francis Clark (1986), (1987), and (2003). His thesis has not found widespread support. See Dal Santo (2010), with bibliography.

But there is a deeper and more compelling reason why Gregory and later sixth-century Rome and Italy should be included under the rubric 'early Byzantine'. As pope, Gregory was head of an institution, the papacy, which was thoroughly rooted in the structures of empire throughout this period.[57] To an exceedingly large degree, Gregory's wider world remained that created by the Emperor Justinian's (527–65) attempt to restore imperial domination over the western Mediterranean, shaped by the problems and opportunities that the only partial realization of Justinian's ambitions had created.[58] Before his election as pope, Gregory spent a lengthy spell at Constantinople where he made a range of friendships and acquaintances, ecclesiastical and secular, which remained important throughout his life. Naturally, this raises the question of Gregory's competence in Greek, which he routinely downplayed.[59] This competence can almost certainly be revised upwards: despite claiming an ignorance of that language, it is highly likely that Gregory knew a lot more than he admitted.[60] Even if he did not possess the level of proficiency necessary to compose literary Greek or read the classical language with ease, Gregory's friendship with and real affection for several Greek-speaking correspondents—notably Domitian of Melitene, Eulogius of Alexandria, and Anastasius of Antioch—suggest a degree of ability that enabled Gregory to speak, understand, and read to a certain level in the language.[61] A sign of his interest in contemporary Greek theology, Gregory was the first 'westerner' to refer to the ideas of

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[57] See Delogu (2000).

[58] Markus (1981) 21. On Justinian, see further Evans (1996); also Maas (2005) and Cameron (1993) 123–7.

[59] See, for example, Gregory the Great, *Epp.* 7.29, 11.55. On the relationship between Greek and Latin in this period, see Dagron (1969); and now Millar (2009) 102: 'The interchange, or dialogue, between Latin and Greek was fundamental to the public life, both governmental and ecclesiastical, of sixth-century Constantinople and its empire'. See also Rapp (2004).

[60] Müller (2009) 72–4; Boesch Gajano (2004) 28–9; Dagens (1981); and Petersen (1976). For a less optimistic view, see Bartelink (1995); Riché (1962) 189; and Homes Dudden (1905) I, 153–4.

[61] Boesch Gajano calls it a 'certa dimestichezza con il greco' and points to, among other things, Gregory's reference to having read Eusebius of Caesarea's *Acts of the Martyrs*, for which no Latin translation is known: Boesch Gajano (2004) 28–9; cf. Gregory the Great, *ep.* 8.28. Gregory and Eulogius were members of an apparently close-knit circle of imperial patriarchs at the end of the sixth century. On this group, see Goubert (1967) and Allen (1980) (who overlooks Gregory the Great). See also Cameron (2009). I thank Prof. Cameron for very kindly supplying me with a copy of her paper.

Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite.[62] Gregory need not have read Pseudo-Dionysius for himself, but he may have heard of his ideas from his Greek-speaking friends who had.

Gregory's life and times enjoy excellent recent accounts in several languages and, while there is no need to repeat all their findings here, it may be worth recapitulating the major stages of his *curriculum vitae*.[63] It is generally assumed that Gregory was born into an aristocratic family at Rome in around 540. By Gregory's own statement, his great-grandfather (*avatus meus*) was Pope Felix III (483–92), a figure sometimes linked to the powerful *gens Anicia*.[64] In 573 Gregory himself served as Urban Prefect of Rome, the highest post in the civilian government of the city.[65] After becoming a monk in 575, Gregory was ordained by Pope Pelagius II (579–90) and sent, in 579, to act as papal responsary, or *apocrisarius*, at the court in Constantinople.[66] That Gregory enjoyed the confidence of the imperial family was clearly displayed in 584 when the Emperor Maurice (582–602) chose Gregory to act as godfather to his son, Theodosius, the first imperial prince born to a reigning emperor since the early fifth century.[67] Returning to Italy in 585/6, Gregory was made a deacon of the Roman Church, a position that included him within the inner circle of Rome's ecclesiastical administrators.[68] Following the death of his predecessor and patron during an outbreak of the plague in 590, Gregory was elected, apparently unanimously, to the pontificate.[69] It is said that Gregory endeavoured (in vain) to resist his election and the prologue to the *Dialogues* resonates with his other writings that lament the lost tranquillity of the monastery that his election brought about.[70] Nevertheless, between 590 and his death in 604 Gregory held the ecclesiastical office of highest honour in the empire—that of bishop of 'Old Rome'—during a distinctly difficult period in the history of the city of Rome, Italy, and the empire.[71]

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[62] See Gregory's discussion of the pseudo-Dionysian ranks of angels in *Homiliae in Evangelia* 34. The Areopagite's influence on Gregory has been noted before: Caspar (1933) II, 399; Micaelli (1992); and Markus (1997) 86.

[63] I follow here Markus (1997) 3–14; Boesch Gajano (2004) 21–5; and Müller (2009).

[64] On Felix, see Bratož (2000).

[65] A brother of his possibly held the same office in 590: Boesch Gajano (2004) 25, 54. On the structures of government in Byzantine Italy, see above all T. S. Brown (1984).

[66] The *apocrisarius* served as the pope's representative to the emperor in Constantinople. On the office, see Llewellyn (1971) 117–19. For Gregory in this role, see Markus (1997) 10–12; Boesch Gajano (2004) 44–8; Müller (2009) 66–79; also Herrin (1987) 157–60.

[67] The child was born on 4 August 583: Michael Whitby (1988) 18; Markus (1997) 12. Theodosius was crowned as emperor with his father on 26 March 590.

[68] On the office of deacon, see Llewellyn (1971) 114.

[69] On Pelagius II, see Sotinel (2000).

It was once argued that, desirous of escaping imperial meddling in papal affairs, Gregory forged a new papal *Außenpolitik* focused on the future medieval west, but Robert Markus above all has demonstrated that Gregory never questioned the emperor's sovereignty in Italy, nor envisaged Rome as part of a political community other than the 'most holy Christian empire' (*sanctissima res publica Christiana*) to which he was implicitly committed.[72] Not until the eighth century would Gregory's papal successors seriously begin to contemplate life outside the framework of the empire. In Gregory's day, the imperial presence at Rome was embodied above all in the figure of the city's military governor resident on the Palatine.[73] Indeed, it has recently been argued that this presence was a much more significant factor in the city's life in the aftermath of the imperial re-conquest than the western-orientated historians of the city have normally allowed.[74] Certainly, this study implicitly offers a view of Gregory's Rome—and perhaps early Byzantine Italy more generally—that challenges the traditional portrayal of the city and peninsula as a backwater under the firm thumb of the 'Catholic Church', largely disconnected in this period from the cultural transformations taking place elsewhere in the Mediterranean world.[75] By stressing the ongoing presence of religious dissent in the city that had not yet spawned the medieval 'Republic of St Peter', I shall endeavour to demonstrate both the debt and contribution of early Byzantine Rome to the intellectual culture of what are conventionally represented as the more dynamic societies and cultures of the eastern Mediterranean.[76]

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[70] Boesch Gajano (2004) 37–8, 53–6. Note also the astute observation that the prologue belongs to the 'broad tradition' of the 'dialogues of ancient phlosophy', of which Boethius's *Consolations of Philosophy* is the best known representative from the sixth century: Leyser (2000*a*) 134.

[71] For Rome's place in the imperial church, see Herrin (1987). For the difficulties the empire faced during this decade, see esp. Michael Whitby (1988) 11–13; on Italy, see T. S. Brown (1984) 2–3, Christie (1995) 87–91 and, at greater length, Hodgkin (1895), V, 344–88.

[72] Markus (1981) and (1997) 83–96; see also Magdalino (2004) and Cremascoli (2004). For earlier views, see esp. Ullmann (1955) 36; idem (1972), 52–9; and also Caspar (1933) II, 306–514.

[73] See T. S. Brown (1984) 53–6; and Coates-Stephens (2006). For later Italian 'secessionism' from the empire, see ibid. 159–63 and (1988). For Italian attitudes in the sixth century, see also Sotinel (2005). On the importance of Rome and Italy from a Constantinopolitan perspective into the seventh century, see Haldon (1997*b*) 59–61.

[74] See Coates-Stephens (2006) and with special interest for Gregory the Great and the cult of the Virgin at Rome, idem (forthcoming). For the emperor's authority in sixth-century Rome, see also Humphries (2007), which effectively revises Humphries (2000) 550 on this issue.

In the 1990s, excavations at Pescara (Aternum), on Italy's Adriatic coast, unearthed a cache of locally made fineware pottery dating from between the final decades of the sixth century and the early decades of the seventh.[77] Known as 'Crecchio ware', the pottery indicated the existence of direct imperial ('Byzantine') control over a swathe of Italy, hitherto unknown to historians and archaeologists alike.[78] What makes the late sixth-century pottery of the Abruzzi so distinctive, however, is its striking resemblance to the ceramic styles of contemporary Egypt. It has been postulated that this reflects both the area's garrisoning by a regiment raised in that province and, in a wider perspective, the effective drawing of those parts of Italy under imperial authority into the empire's commercial networks in the eastern Mediterranean.[79] On one level, the economic exchange between Byzantine Italy and Egypt which the Crecchio ware points to exemplifies an access to eastern markets and fashions that the inhabitants of other parts of Italy appear not to have enjoyed.[80] On another level, however, the Crecchio ware of Byzantine Abruzzo seemingly offers a tangible, material instantiation of the interplay of cultures that was the direct consequence of the incorporation of the Italian peninsula into a Roman empire now ruled from

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[75] Earlier studies like Llewellyn (1971) and Herrin (1987) tend in this negative direction.

[76] For the papacy's emergence as a political entity in the early medieval period, see Noble (1984). Note also the 'Afterword', in the revised edition of Llewellyn's *Rome in the Dark Ages*, 2nd edn. (London, 1993), 316–27, which offers the notion of 'patriarchal' rather than 'papal' Rome to describe the city during the first phase of Byzantine government (*c.* 554–690) of which Gregory the Great ('[a]bove all a man of the imperial world') was the emblematic embodiment.

[77] Staffa and Pellegrini (1993); also Zanini (1998) 30; and Wickham (2005) 736.

[78] Imperial authority in the Abruzzi held out against Lombard aggression until *c.* 650: Zanini (1998) 256–60. The invasion is normally said to have begun in 568, although some Lombards evidently served in the imperial armies before this. On the Lombards in Italy, see Wickham (1981) 28–47 and Christie (1995) esp. 73–108.

[79] Zanini (1998) 292–3. For a more sober outlook, compare T. S. Brown (1984) 82–108; and Wickham (2005) 728–41, (2000). On Egypt, see Sarris (2006) 10–28.

[80] Zanini (1998) 314, 331. See also Marazzi (1998) 119–60.

Constantinople.[81] This is because the ceramics producers of Byzantine Abruzzo did not merely import Egyptian pottery but copied its designs in the production of local Abruzzese wares, giving rise, it has been argued, to a domestic style that wed 'Coptic' and Italian elements. While it would be easy to overstate the significance of such evidence for the cultural history of late sixth-century Italy as a whole, it can alert the historian to the potential discovery of similar exchanges in other regions and even, perhaps, on cultural registers other than the ceramic.[82] It is thus a secondary aim of the current study to throw into relief how far Gregory's *Dialogues* were, integrally, a product of the world of the inter-regional exchanges between Italy and the eastern Mediterranean that Justinian's reconquest promoted; that is to say, a Latin text whose historical *raison d'être* largely lay nevertheless in the ideas and anxieties of contemporary East Roman ('Byzantine') society, focalized at Constantinople.[83]

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[81] See also Nordhagen (2000) for other media. On communication between Constantinople and Italy, see Sotinel (2004) and Delogu (2000) 209–10.

[82] Enrico Zanini has noted that the picture of widespread destruction offered by the literary sources contrasts 'singolarmente con l'immagine che restituiscono invece [. . .] i materiali ceramici e numismatici e che è quella di un tessuto commerciale comunque vivo, fatto di scambi a lungo, medio e corto raggio, catterizzato dal soppravivere di un'economia di scambio su base monetaria': Zanini (1998) 317. But Wickham is cautious and characterizes late sixth-century Italy as 'a series of isolated, sometimes very simple, micro-regional economies/societies', and Justinian's war of reconquest as 'one of the most continuous and serious periods of violence anywhere in the late Roman and post-Roman west': Wickham (2005) 36, 203.

[83] A similar claim has been made recently for Junillus the African's treatise on divine law: Maas (2003) 4–5. For earlier attempts to do similarly with Gregory, see esp. Petersen (1984) and (1987).

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Gregory the Great and Eustratius of Constantinople

The Dialogues on the Miracles of the Italian Fathers *as an apology for the cult of the saints*

You overpower him once for all, and he is gone;
You change his countenance and send him away.
If his sons are honoured, he does not know it;
If they are brought low, he does not see it.[1]

Thus mused Job on man's existence *post mortem*, faithful to traditional Jewish expectations in the Old Testament concerning the shadowy afterlife of the dead in Sheol. When he considered this passage in his commentary on the Old Testament book, *Moralia in Iob* (hereafter, *Moralia*), however, Gregory the Great disagreed regarding the souls of the saints. Anxious that the passage seemed to suggest the *post-mortem* inactivity of the disembodied human soul in a way that would undermine the saints' continued vitality beyond the grave, Gregory wrote:

> For just as those who are still alive do not know in what place the souls of the dead are preserved, so the dead do not know how the lives of those who remain behind them in the flesh are ordered. [. . .] *But this must not be understood concerning holy souls* (*animabus sanctis*). Since these behold the brightness of Almighty God within, *it must not be believed in any way that there is anything without of which they may be ignorant*.[2]

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[1] Job 14.20–1.

[2] Gregory the Great, *Moralia in Iob*, 12.26 in C. Marriott (trans.), *Morals on the Book of Job*, vol. 2 (Oxford, 1845), 62 (my italics) = CCL 143A:644–45: *Sicut enim hi qui adhuc uiuentes sunt mortuorum animae quo loco habeantur ignorant, ita mortui*

It has been readily acknowledged that the Old Testament concept of Sheol was difficult to reconcile to the late antique Christian saints' cult.[3] The Old Testament's portrayal of the diminished activity, mobility, and perceptive faculties of the disembodied soul *post mortem* collided with the Christian belief in the saints as heavenly patrons and intercessors.[4] For Christian hagiographers, death brought about not a curtailment of the activity of their subject's soul, but its increase. Divested of the body's encumbrance, the saints' souls heard the prayers addressed to them by supplicants, interceded with God and performed miracles from beyond the grave for their sake. Or did they?

The *post-mortem* activity of human souls—*holy* souls, in particular—was the subject of a significant debate during the late sixth century, especially in the provinces of the East Roman ('Byzantine') empire. Classically, of course, the saints' familiarity with God—their 'freedom of speech' (or *parrhesia*)—enabled them to perform miracles whether the saint in question was 'dead' or 'alive'. Indeed, the very terms seem inadequate to describe Christian views of the ongoing posthumous activity of the 'very special dead'.[5] Conceived of as 'living' intercessors before the throne of God, shrines dedicated to deceased saints blossomed across the Mediterranean world from Egypt to Gaul and beyond, with pilgrims travelling in great numbers to these shrines to present their supplications to the saints.[6] Through the examination of two texts from Rome and Constantinople at the end of the sixth century, both apparently produced in defence of the saints' activity *post mortem*, it is the purpose of this chapter to explore the tensions created by the Christian saints' cult and other ritual practices in early Byzantium. As we shall see,

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uita in carne uiuentium post eos qualiter disponatur nesciunt, quia et uita spiritus longe est a uita carnis. Et sicut corporea atque incorporea diuersa sunt genere, ita etiam distincta cognitione. Quod tamen de animis sanctis sententiendum non est, quia quae intus omnipotentis Dei claritatem uident nullo modo credendum est quia sit foris aliquid quod ignorant. For the problems surrounding the date of the *Moralia*, which Gregory began at Constantinople but completed at Rome, see Müller (2009) 99–106.

[3] Van Uytfanghe (1989) 166. For the history of early Christian eschatology, see above all Daley (1991).

[4] See van Uytfanghe (1991); Constable (2000) 171; and Constas (2001) 92.

[5] On the relative unimportance of this basic distinction for the saints' cult, see Rapp (2007).

[6] On Christian pilgrimage in the fourth and fifth centuries, see Frank (2000) and Bitton-Ashkelony (2005). The latter also includes discussion of the various debates pilgrimage generated.

contemporaries contested the saints' miracles and relationship with the Godhead. Supporters of the saints answered their anxieties with a distinctive view of sainthood which, this study argues, represents the proper setting for Gregory's the *Dialogues on the Miracles of the Italian Fathers*.[7] By underlining the importance of Constantinopolitan theological speculation for the Roman pope's writings on the holy men of Italy, the chapter also suggests the depth of intellectual currents between the empire's two capitals.

Before broaching the early Byzantine debate, however, we may note that already in the late fourth century Vigilantius, a presbyter from southern Gaul, had raised objections to the Christian cult of the dead.[8] We know about Vigilantius's complaints primarily through Jerome of Stridon's violent denunciation of them in his notorious pamphlet, *Against Vigilantius*.[9] Vigilantius appears to have contended, on the one hand, that the veneration of saintly relics amounted to idolatry, and, on the other, that ardent supplication of deceased martyrs was futile since the inactivity of their souls *post mortem* disabled their ability to hear as much as to respond to the requests of their earthly supplicants.[10] It will be readily observed that Vigilantius's criticisms come strikingly close to those levelled against the saints' cult by its rationalist critics at Constantinople and elsewhere at the end of the sixth century. Despite this, the texts connected to the earlier controversy (notably, Jerome's *Against Vigilantius*) do not appear to have played any role in the early Byzantine debate, where Gregory the Great especially (since he might have been expected to have known of Jerome's text) appears to have chosen not to draw on this legacy.[11]

AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO ON THE SAINTS' ACTIVITY *POST MORTEM*

Much more significant for Gregory's response to the sixth-century attack on the saints' posthumous miracles was Augustine (*c*. 354–430) of Hippo's views on the soul's *post-mortem* activity. It is well known that Augustine's writings exercised a strong influence over Gregory's theological formation.[12] Yet Gregory's insistence on the saints' activity beyond the grave prior to the Resurrection represented a significant advance from Augustine's views in his short treatise, *On the Care of the Dead*.[13] In 420, Paulinus of Nola (*c.* 354–421) wrote to Augustine concerning the merits that accrued to the dead through church burial.[14] In replying that such burial was only effective inasmuch as it reminded the deceased's friends and relatives to pray for his or her soul, Augustine explored the evidence for the nature and quality of the soul's *post-mortem* existence, including the visions of the martyrs and Eucharistic commemoration of the dead.[15] But Augustine left open the vexed question whether the visions that believers enjoyed of the martyrs occurred with the martyrs' own conscious awareness. He affirmed:

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[7] This argument was originally published as Dal Santo (2009*b*).

[8] See above all Hunter (1999) and Clark (1999); and Piétri (1991) 29.

[9] Kelly (1975) 286–90; and Bitton-Ashkelony (2005) 97–105.

[10] Hunter (1999) 422–9.

[11] Jerome's apology featured prominently, however, in ninth-century debates about the propriety of the saints' cult: Sansterre (1999).

> It is said that dead men have at times either in dreams or in some other way appeared to the living [. . .]. These things if we shall answer to be false, we shall be thought impudently to contradict the writings of faithful men, and the senses of them who assure us that such things have happened to themselves. But [. . .] it does not follow that we are to account the dead to have sense of these things, because they appear in dreams to say or indicate or ask this. For living men do also appear ofttimes to the living as they sleep, while they themselves know not that they do appear; and they are told by them, what they dreamed, namely, that in their dream the speakers saw them doing or saying something.[16]

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[12] Dudden (1905); Dagens (1977); Straw (1988).

[13] Augustine, *De cura pro mortuis gerenda* 12 (*PL* 40:591–610) in *Seventeen Short Treatises of S. Augustine*, C. Marriott (ed.), C. Lewis Cornish and H. Browne (trans.), Library of the Fathers (Oxford, 1847), pp. 517–42 = CSEL 41:619–60. My translation adapts the former.

[14] Trout (1999) 244–7. Paulinus, as a friend and correspondent of Victricius, bishop of Rouen, can be closely linked to those who opposed Vigilantius and his attack on the saints: Hunter (1999) 404–5; Trout (1999) 238–40. It is interesting to consider whether Paulinus's epistle to Augustine at Hippo on the subject of burial *ad sanctos* was in some way also connected to the earlier controversy over the propriety of the saints' cult.

[15] For the kind of contemporary expectations that Augustine sought to correct, see Duval (1988) 3–21 and 201: '[Augustin] répète inlassablement que [. . .] la seule utilité d'une sépulture près des saints est de susciter les prières des vivants.'

[16] Augustine, *Care of the Dead* 12 in *Seventeen Short Treatises*, Marriott (ed.), p. 529 = CSEL 41:639–40: *feruntur quippe mortui nonnulli uel in somnis uel in alio quicumque modo adparuisse uiuentibus [. . .]. haec si falsa esse responderimus, contra*

Naturally, this diminished the extent to which the martyrs themselves could be thought of as the agents of their posthumous apparitions and miracles: Augustine's views may not have been welcome news to Paulinus who had recently reported to his friend the vision of St Felix which Paulinus had himself beheld at Nola during a siege by barbarians.[17] Indeed, it has been said that, in his treatise, Augustine 'left little room for the Christian *sanctus* as heavenly *comes*. [. . .] Augustine took a position that confounded contemporary expectations and subverted [. . .] a deeply rooted confidence in the power of the holy dead both to protect the deceased from the demonic forces and to intercede with God on their behalf.'[18]

In other words, Augustine did not share Gregory's sixth-century confidence that the *post-mortem* existence of holy souls was qualitatively different from the rest of humanity. Rather, Augustine appears to have considered the martyrs' souls as being largely bound by the same natural laws as those of other men; if they appeared in visions to the living, it was by a special 'divine power', rather than in their own human substance. Augustine seems to deny that even the holy dead enjoy knowledge of the world here-below.[19] Thus, in *City of God*, Augustine affirmed that, while the martyrs' miracles proved Christ's resurrection and ascension, these miracles need not be performed by the martyrs themselves. Perhaps God himself or even the angels carried out the miracles and apparitions that the saints seemed to perform:

> For it matters not whether God does these things in person, in the marvellous way in which the Eternal brings about events in time, or does them through his servants. Nor in the case of deeds done through his servants does it matter whether he does some deeds through the spirits of martyrs [. . .], or does all these things through angels [. . .], so

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quorundam scripta fidelium et contra eorum sensus, qui talia sibi accidisse confirmant, inpudenter uenire uidebimur. sed [. . .] non ideo putandum esse mortuos ista sentire, quia haec dicere uel indicare uel petere uidentur in somnis. nam et uiuentes adparent saepe uiuentibus dormientibus, dum se ipsi nesciant adparere, et ab eis haec quae somniauerint audiunt dicentibus, quod eos in somnis uiderint agentes aliquid uel loquentes.

[17] Augustine, *Care of the Dead* 19 = CSEL 41:652.

[18] Trout (1999) 246.

[19] Duval (1988) 16.

> that the things said to be done by martyrs are done through their prayers and intercessions alone, and not by any action on their part.[20]

But, in *On the Care of the Dead* at least, Augustine did not wish to pronounce too categorically, writing:

> [. . .] which of these two be the case, or whether perchance both one and the other be the case, that sometimes these things be done by very presence of the martyrs [*per ipsam praesentiam martyrum*], sometimes by angels taking upon themselves the person of the martyrs [*per angelos suscipientes personam martyrum*], I dare not assert [. . .].[21]

Augustine's alternative explanations for the *post mortem* apparitions of the saints, that is, their direct performance by God himself or the assumption of the saints' appearance by an angel, were also proposed by those who sought to contest the saints' personal operation in their miracles in sixth-century Constantinople. Neither did Augustine consider that the church's practice of praying for the dead during the Eucharist, whose basic propriety he naturally upheld as a custom handed down by tradition, was an argument for or against the soul's activity *post mortem*.[22] Yet Augustine's agnosticism was no longer acceptable by the sixth century, at least in Gregory's mind. Too much was at stake, including the saints' cult and the Eucharistic sacrifice for the dead whose relevance to the problem Augustine had so easily discounted.

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[20] Augustine, *Ciu.*, 22.9 in Saint Augustine, *City of God Against the Pagans*, W. Green (ed.), vol. 7, Loeb, (Cambridge, Mass., 1972), pp. 250–3: *Sive enim Deus ipse per se ipsum miro modo quo res temporales operatur aeternus, sive per suos ministros ista faciat. Et eadem ipsa, quae per ministros facit, sive quaedam faciat etiam per martyrum spiritus [. . .], sive omnia ista per angelos [. . .] ut quae per martyres fieri dicuntur eis orantibus tantum et inpetrantibus, non etiam operantibus fiant*. For Augustine's attitude towards the martyr cult generally, including his reception of the St Stephen's relics at Hippo, see Bitton-Ashkelony (2005) 132–9; Trout (1999) 247–50; and Brown (2000*d*) 418–19.

[21] Augustine, *Care of the Dead* 20 in *Seventeen Short Treatises*, Marriott (ed.), p. 539 = CSEL 41:654: *[. . .] et ideo quid horum duorum sit, an uero fortassis utrumque sit, ut aliquando ista fiant per ipsam praesentiam martyrum, aliquando per angelos suscipientes personam martyrum, definire non audeo*.

[22] See further Rebillard (2003) 190–3; Ntedika (1971) 92–8. Augustine and Eustratius each appear to be the first to adduce, in Latin and Greek respectively, the sacrifices offered to God by the Jewish army for the souls of the dead as authority for Christian liturgical practice in this regard: Ntedika (1971) 7.

GREGORY, EUSTRATIUS, AND EUTYCHIUS OF CONSTANTINOPLE

Gregory's *Dialogues on the Miracles of the Italian Fathers* comprise four dialogues between Gregory and a Roman deacon named Peter, probably one of two historical deacons named Peter found in the *Register* of Gregory's correspondence and entrusted with the pope's confidence on a range of matters.[23] The prologue to the *Dialogues* begins with Gregory's report that the saints' miracles troubled the deacon, since, as the latter believed, Italy appeared to have produced no native thaumaturges. 'I do not know', Peter asserted,

> of any persons of Italy whose lives give evidence of extraordinary spiritual powers [. . .]. This land of ours has undoubtedly produced its virtuous men but to my knowledge no signs or miracles have been performed by any of them; or, if there have been, they have been kept in such secrecy until now that we cannot be sure whether they occurred.[24]

To this fear of a dearth of home-grown thaumaturgy, Gregory replied eager to confirm the saints' miracles with reliable sources, claiming that 'the day would not be long enough' for him to recount all he knew concerning Italy's saints.[25] The product was the *Dialogues*—a text which, as we shall see, gave expression to voices that were more reluctant to believe in the saints' miracles than many late antique hagiographers, and modern historians, normally admit. Thus, the first dialogue records the miracles of some twelve bishops, priests and monks within living memory of Gregory's composition of the text between the summer of 593 and the autumn of 594.[26] The second dialogue focuses on the miracles of one particular saint, Benedict of Nursia, and has been taken to represent Gregory's conscious attempt to provide a *Life* for him.[27] The third dialogue returns to the narration of multiple saints' miracles, mostly in Italy, with the setting occasionally shifting to Constantinople, Africa, and Spain. With the fourth dialogue, Gregory defends the soul's *post-mortem* existence and corollary eschatological doctrines. Throughout, Gregory employs a question and answer style with Deacon Peter serving as the bishop's interlocutor. Indeed, the various questions that Peter poses on the nature of the saints' miracles are crucial to this chapter's argument.

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[23] De Vogüé, SC 251:44–45; Boesch-Gajano (2004*a*) 187 n. 5.

[24] Gregory the Great, *Dial.* Prol. 7 (SC 260:14): *Non ualde in Italia aliquorum uitam uirtutibus fulsisse congnoui. [. . .] Et quidem bonos uiros in hac terra fuisse non dubito, signa tamen atque uirtutes aut ab eis nequaquam factas exsistimo, aut ita sunt hactenus silentio suppressa, ut utrumne sint facta nesciamus.*

[25] Gregory the Great, *Dial.* Prol. 8 (SC 260:14–16).

[26] With the exception of Benedict, most of Gregory's holy men were not remembered liturgically by later generations: de Gaiffier (1965).

As will become clear, the present study rejects the view, recently advanced by Francis Clark, that Gregory the Great's *Dialogues* are a seventh-century forgery composed out of some genuinely Gregorian material left unedited in the papal *scrinium* combined with the florid imagination of a later author's less sophisticated mind.[28] Although a few have accepted Clark's analysis,[29] most leading scholars in the field have dismissed Clark's challenge and point to numerous witnesses to Gregory's authorship of the *Dialogues* before 650.[30] Far from being 'sensation-seeking yarns' (in Clark's words),[31] unworthy by nature of a doctor of the church, the *Dialogues* will emerge here as a careful exploration of the nature and operation of the saints' miracles and implicitly of the legitimacy of the saints' cult itself in an early Byzantine setting where the propriety of that cult and the dynamics of human thaumaturgy were being fiercely contested in elite circles, often on the grounds of intellectual commitments of surprising sophistication. But this reading of the text itself stands in conflict with the traditional interpretation of Gregory's account of the miracles of the Italian saints as as a kind of 'preacher's manual' for the illiterate and the simple.[32] Calati, for instance, has recently written that 'the narration of the *Dialogues* is intended [. . .] to render comprehensible concepts and matters of the faith otherwise completely inaccessible to a simple and illiterate people.'[33] Although the foundation of affirmations like this seems to be the prominent place of the miraculous in Gregory's text, high-brow enthusiasm for saints, relics, and miracle stories is confirmed by Gregory's *Register*, where a letter Gregory dispatched to the *patricia* Rusticiana at Constantinople reveals a striking similarity between Gregory's depiction of the saints' miracles in the *Register* and the *Dialogues*.[34]

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[27] On the complex relationship between Gregory and St Benedict, author of the famous Rule, see Leyser (1991), with bibliography.

[28] See Clark (2003, 1987, 1986). For a taste of Clark's argument, see Clark (2003) 199: 'is it plausible to suggest that the real Gregory, whose character and spirit we know so well from the works in which he pours out his pastoral and spiritual ideals, would have considered it a worthy use of his time and talents [. . .] to devote himself to writing a book of *fictional fairytales* [. . .]?' My italics.

[29] Dunn (2000*a*) 137, and (2000*b*).

[30] Meyvaert (1988) and (2004); Godding (1988); de Vogüé (1991, 1988); Moorhead (2003); Pricoco (2004). Their views are accepted in Markus (1997); and Boesch-Gajano (2004*a*).

[31] Clark (2003) 149.

[32] See, for example, Dudden (1905) 1: 321–56; Caspar (1930) I: 398; Auerbach, (1965) 103; Dagens (1977) 228–33; McCready (1989) 107; Cracco Ruggini (1981) 172; Markus (1997) 67.

Important evidence of the text's original purpose lies in the circumstances of its production. The *Dialogues* almost certainly arose out of the requests that Gregory received from the brothers from his former monastery at St Andrew's on the Caelian who accompanied him to the Lateran after his election as pope.[35] Thus, in July 593, Gregory addressed a letter to Bishop Maximian of Syracuse, a former member of St Andrew's. In it, Gregory stated that:

> My brethren who live with me on friendly terms compel me in every way to write something briefly about the miracles of the Fathers, which we have heard took place in Italy. For which matter, I earnestly need the solace of your Charity, so that whatever ones [miracle stories] you recall to memory, and whatever ones you happen to have discovered, you will briefly describe to me.[36]

Indeed, Gregory further recalled that Maximian was well informed about the miracles performed by one Abbot Nonnosus of Pentumis, whose deeds did in fact subsequently appear in Gregory's first dialogue, duly attributed to Maximian as Gregory's source.[37] Among other things, Gregory's letter to Maximian implied that the saints' miracles formed the substance of regular conversations between Gregory and other members of the papal household. These men, like Gregory himself and the members of St Andrew's, were undoubtedly from elite social backgrounds and their evident interest in the miracles of the saints should put to rest any judgement regarding the popular mentality of Gregory's *Dialogues*.[38] Indeed, across the contemporary Christian world, culturally elite Christians engaged in organized monastic lifestyles were encouraged to read hagiographical literature seriously and the sixth-century *Rule of Benedict* prescribed the communal telling of the Lives of the saints as an integral aspect of monastic observance.[39] Indeed, such ascetics expected spiritual benefits not only from reading, but also writing hagiography.[40]

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[33] Calati (2000) 11: 'Anche la narrazione dei *Dialoghi è* tesa [. . .] a rendere comprensibili concetti e proposte della feda altrimenti del tutto inaccessibili ad un populo semplice e analfabeto.' It is something of a staple view.

[34] See Dal Santo (2010). The letter (*ep.* 11.26), dated to February 601, reported the stories about the miracles performed by St Andrew at the monastery Gregory had dedicated to him on the Caelian hill and which Rusticiana sponsored financially from Constantinople. On the cult of St Andrew at this monastery, see Coates-Stephens (2007) and Müller (2009) 31–40.

[35] See McClure (1978) 190–216.

[36] Gregory the Great, *Ep.* 3.50 in J. R. C. Martyn (trans.), *The Letters of Gregory the Great*, Medieval Sources in Translation 40 (Toronto, 2004), I, 268–9 = *S. Gregorii Magni Registrum Epistolarum*, D. Norberg (ed.), CCSL 140 (Turnhout, 1982), 195–6: *Fratres mei, qui mecum familiariter uiuunt, omnimodo me compellunt aliqua de miraculis patrum, quae in Italia facta audiuimus, sub breuitate scribere. Ad quem rem solacio uestrae caritatis uehementer indigeo, ut quaeque uobis in memorian redeunt, quaeque cognouisse uos contigit, mihi breuiter indicetis.*

Yet we should not imagine that undisturbed tranquillity reigned either at St Andrew's or the Lateran.[41] Other letters of Gregory's, particularly those addressed to eastern correspondents, reveal that the papal household was the scene of significant discussion and debate concerning a range of matters.[42] It will be argued here that in light of the probing questions Gregory dealt with systematically in the *Dialogues*, the subjects chosen for debate in Gregory's circle at Rome included the saints and their miracles. Nevertheless, despite their importance, a long-standing tradition has interpreted Peter's questions, which clearly structured the narratives that unfolded in Gregory's text, as little more than a literary device.[43] Unnoticed by western medievalists, however, Gilbert Dagron has demonstrated that a Greek text, written in Constantinople *circa* 582 by Eustratius the presbyter, brings forward by more than half a century the outbreak of a debate on the saints that is sometimes thought to have culminated in Byzantine iconoclasm.[44] In his unfortunately incomplete treatise, *On the State of Souls after Death*, Eustratius defended the soul's activity *post mortem* specifically in order to safeguard the saints' veneration.[45] Eustratius's opponents argued that if the human soul were inactive after death, the saints could be no use to those who supplicated them. Clearly, this carried it with major implications for the contemporary saints' cult. Historically, Eustratius's text must have been composed after 582, when Patriarch Eutychius died (he is referred to in the treatise as deceased), and in all likelihood before 602, when Eustratius composed his *Life and Passion of Golinduch* with his views on the saints' activity *post mortem* already fully formed.[46] The text has generally resisted efforts to date it more precisely, but the eruption in 593–4 (the same year as Gregory's composition of the *Dialogues* at Rome) of a controversy at Constantinople about the authenticity of the miracles of St Euphemia may be connected.[47]

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[37] See *Dial.* 1.7. See also *Dial.* 3.36 where Gregory recounted the miracle performed for Maximian's own benefit on the return voyage from Constantinople to Rome, after his sojourn with Gregory in the capital during the latter's period as *apocrisarius*. See also Dudden (1905) I, 140.

[38] See Müller (2009) 47–52.

[39] Rapp (1998) 436. See also *RB* 42.3 = *La Règle de Saint Benoît: Texte Latin-Français*, H. Rochais (trans.) (Paris, 1980) 94. This should not be taken to imply that the *Rule of Benedict* was observed in Gregory's monastery. On Gregory's knowledge of the *Rule of Benedict*, see *Dial.* 2.36.1 (SC 260: 242), where Gregory mentions that Benedict composed a *Rule for Monks*; and de Vogüé, SC 251: 155–7.

[40] Krueger (2004).

[41] Of St Andrew's, whose 'inmates [. . .] were a group of like-minded aristocrats', it has been said that 'there can have been no more intellectually earnest, socially confident circle of young men in the late ancient world': Leyser (2000*a*) 131. See also Riché (1962) 213–14.

[42] See for example Gregory's letter to Thedore, the Constantinopolitan deacon whose visit to Rome had occasioned some debate in view of his teaching on Christ's descent into hell, as well as that to Eulogius, Patriarch of Alexandria, one of Gregory's intimates, where the pope describes the effect produced upon his household by the information shared by an Alexandrian doctor: *epp.* 7.15, 13–42.

Eustratius's text is important for reconsidering the *Dialogues*. When set alongside each other, many of the doubts expressed in Eustratius's work seem to reappear in Gregory's. The chronological proximity of the two texts is also significant. The *Dialogues* were written within eleven years of the *terminus post quem* (582) of

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[43] For example, Boglioni (1974) 20; de Vogüé, SC 251:78–9. Boesch-Gajano is an exception: (2004*a*) 236–42, (1979). See also Vitale-Brovarone (1975); and Tateo (1965). For the history of Christian dialogue in late antiquity, see Voss (1974), esp. 357–9; and for sixth-century developments, see Cooper and Dal Santo (2008).

[44] Dagron (1992) 66.

[45] Eustratius of Constantinople, *De statu animarum post mortem* (CCG 60). Hereafter, *stat. anim.*

[46] For Eustratius's *Life and Passion of Golinduch* († 591), see Peeters (1944), Garitte (1956), Laga (1958) and now Dal Santo (2011*b*). The text can be found in A. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, *Ἀνάλεκτα Ἱεροσολυμιτικῆς Σταχυολογίας* 4. 149–74 (St Petersburg, 1897) and 5.395–6 (St Petersburg, 1898).

[47] See Theophylact Simocatta, *History*, C. de Boor (ed.) (Leipzig, 1887) 8.14.1–9 = *The History of Theophylact Simocatta*, Michael and Mary Whitby (eds.) (Oxford, 1986), 233–4. I thank Phil Booth for pointing this story out to me. See further Dal Santo (2011*c*).

Eustratius's treatise and it is highly probable that Gregory and Eustratius knew of each other, since Gregory was *aprocrisarius* (papal envoy) at Constantinople from 579 to 585/7, during which time Eustratius may have framed his treatise (although their personal acquaintance is not strictly necessary for this chapter's argument). Eustratius was, moreover, a priest in the entourage of Eutychius, Patriarch of Constantinople (553–65 and 577–82), later the Patriarch's biographer and redactor, as we have seen, of a Greek version of the passion of the contemporary Persian martyr, Golinduch.[48] Indeed, Eustratius's informant for the details of Golinduch's passion was Domitian of Melitene, the Emperor Maurice's (582–602) close relative and an important correspondent of Gregory's.[49] Moreover, Patriarch Eutychius engaged Gregory in a public debate on the nature of the Resurrection, which Gregory discusses in the fourteenth book of his *Moralia*, a commentary on the well-known Job 19.25–26: '[. . .] after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God'. According to Gregory, Eutychius believed that the resurrected human body would be 'impalpable, and more subtle than the wind or the air'.[50] Gregory held the opposing view of the resurrected body's full corporeality. For his part, John of Ephesus, a contemporary ecclesiastical historian, asserted that Euthychius owed his doctrine to John Philoponus who published a controversial treatise on the subject in the 570s.[51] In any case, Gregory ultimately received the backing of Emperor Tiberius II (578–82) who also ordered the treatise Eutychius wrote on the subject to be burned.[52] Yet there is some mystery as to how Gregory and his opponent got into the dispute, for when one considers Eustratius's *On the State of Souls*, both Gregory and the circle around Eutychius appear closer allies in the defence of the saints' miracles and the Church's sacramental rituals than their earlier confrontation would imply.[53] Whether at Rome or at Constantinople, we are dealing with a single imperial elite whose horizons very much remained those of the empire itself, regardless of whether their language of choice was Greek or Latin.

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[48] For what we know about Eustratius, see Constas (2002) 267–8. He appears to have been a native of Melitene: Peeters (1944). For the *Life of Eutychius*, see *Eustratii Presbyteri Constantinopolitani: Vita Eutychii Patriarchae Constantinopolitani*, C. Laga (ed.), CCG 25 (Turnhout, 1992). For commentary, see Cameron (1988) and (1990). Eutychius, originally a monk, was deposed by Justinian in 565 for opposing imperial aphthartodocetism. Before this fall from favour, however, he was also the subject of a combined encomium by Paul the Silentiary with Justinian on the occasion of the rededication of Hagia Sophia in 565: Mary Whitby (1987).

[49] For Domitian as Eustratius's source, see Cameron (1988) 243. On Domitian, see Whitby (1988) 14. For Domitian and Gregory, see Markus (1997) 12, 161 ('a friend from Constantinople days'); and Müller (2009) 87–9. Eustratius also portrays Patriarch Anastasius of Antioch (who was also deposed for his resistance to Justinian's aphthartodocetism) as one of Eutychius's allies: Cameron (1988) 244–5. Anastasius was, however, also one of Gregory's confidantes, and Gregory offered him refuge at Rome after his deposition: Markus (1997) 12, 89, 161; Müller (2009) 89–92.

[50] Gregory the Great, *Mor.* 14.72 (CCL 143A:743–44). On the debate between the two churchmen, see Duval (1986); Müller (2009) 82–3; and Allen (1981) 38–40. On public disputation in late antiquity, see Lim (1995).

In many ways, these controversies (whether over the Resurrection or the saints) reflect the precision which was increasingly sought in Christian teaching at this time.[54] But the common ground that emerged between Eustratius and Gregory on the saints' cult has wider implications since the quarrel between Gregory and Eutychius is often seen as reflecting the intellectual gulf that separated theological speculation in sophisticated Constantinople from Rome's supposedly more unimaginative adherence to dogma.[55] Indeed, this gulf itself is often taken as emblematic of the increasing cultural estrangement of the two halves, Latin and Greek, of the Mediterranean world. To some extent, Eustratius himself propagated this view when he confronted the controversy over his patron's views in his *Life of Eutychius*. In Eustratius's view, Eutychius 'was suspected by the imperfect of holding an opinion opposed to theirs and of conjecturing about the doctrine of the Resurrection. But the cowards did not know what he really said or affirmed. So, what surprise if the child-minded uttered such things about him?'[56] Although Eustratius did not name him, chief among the 'child-minded' was doubtless Gregory, the Roman *apocrisarius*. Nevertheless, despite the conceit of Latin ignorance and Greek sophistication, the *Dialogues* and *On the State of Souls* display that in both Constantinople and Rome similar objections were raised about the saints' cult, and that, to a large extent, Eustratius and Gregory actually shared a common view of the nature of the saints' miracles as the product of a composite divine–human event in which the saints could be correctly conceived as thaumaturgical agents in their own right without, however, compromising the greater sovereignty of God. This was readily discernible in the way the two authors represented the miracles of holy men. Thus, in his *Life* of Patriarch Eutychius, Eustratius portrayed Eutychius's miracles as resulting from a 'synergy' (συνεργία) between God and the holy man, a notion which resembled Gregory's conception of divine–human 'union' in the second dialogue or *Life of Benedict*.[57] While it has been alleged that '[t]he *Dialogues* and the histories they present point to the change in Roman thinking',[58] we shall see that Gregory's text in fact reflects the Constantinopolitan debate very closely.

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[51] John of Ephesus, *Ecclesiastical History* II.42, Payne Smith (ed. and trans.) (Oxford, 1860) 149: '[. . .] having been led astray by the error of John Grammaticus [that is, Philoponus], Eutychius further said that these bodies of ours do not rise again at the resurrection of the dead, but that others are made, which come to the resurrection in their stead.' John was, however, an inveterate opponent of Eutychius's. On Philoponus's, *De resurrectione*, see MacCoull (2006) 414–15. Fragments survive in Syriac: van Roey (1984).

[52] Gregory the Great, *Mor.* 14.74 (CCL 143A:745).

[53] Compare Walker Bynum (1995*b*) 81–3, 85–6, 104–8, who notes that discontinuity between the earthly and resurrection bodies also seemed to patristic writers to threaten the cult of relics.

[54] See Cameron (1992*a*).

[55] See, for example, Herrin (1987) 125 (the sixth-century popes 'withdrew into the war-torn and unsettled city of Rome') and 181–2 ('the papacy could no longer keep pace with the Christological disputes in the East'); and Llewellyn (1971) 102–3.

EUSTRATIUS OF CONSTANTINOPLE'S *ON THE STATE OF SOULS*

Eustratius began his treatise by describing the rationalist argument against the cult of the saints.[59] According to him, his opponents

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[56] Eustratius of Constantinople, *V. Eut.* = CCG 25:2454–58: ὑπενοεῖτο παρὰ τῶν ἀτελῶν τὴν διάνοιαν τἀναντία τούτοις φρονεῖν καὶ δοξάζειν εἰς τὸν περὶ ἀναστάσεως λόγον, μὴ εἰδότων τῶν δειλαίων μήτε περὶ ὧν ἔλεγε μήτε περὶ ὧν διεβεβαιοῦτο. Καὶ τί θαυμαστὸν εἰ τοιαῦτα ἐφθέγξαντο περὶ αὐτὸν οἱ νηπιόφρονες; Hereafter, *v. Eutych.* Translations here are my own.

[57] For synergy, see Eustratius of Constantinople, *v. Eutych* (CCG 25:1301): [συνεργίᾳ θεοῦ]; (25:1398–99): [διὰ τῆς τοῦ θεοῦ χάριτος καὶ τῶν εὐχῶν τοῦ ἁγίου ἀνδρὸς]; (25:1532): [διὰ τῆς τοῦ θεοῦ συνεργίας]; (25:1786): [συνεργίᾳ θεοῦ]; (25:2425–26): [διὰ τῆς συνεργίας τοῦ ἁγίου Πνεύματος]. On Gregory's 'union', see further below.

[58] Llewellyn (1971) 98.

[59] The most important study of Eustratius's text is Constas (2002). Krausmüller (1998–99) offers a different interpretation. See also Haldon (1997*a*) 45–6. For Byzantine ambivalence towards miracles (without reference to Eustratius), see Auzépy (1995).

> love to spend time talking and philosophizing about human souls. They cast doubt on them and contend that after their migration from this life and the separation of souls from their bodies, souls remain inactive. And souls exist in this condition whether they are the saints' or souls of any other kind. So, if the souls of the saints appear to some people, they say, they do not appear according to their own substance and being. Instead, some divine power assumes their form and thus exhibits the activities of the saints. [They claim that] souls are in a place from where, after exile from the body, they cannot appear to anyone in this life.[60]

It appears that Eustratius's opponents possessed two different accounts of the condition of the human soul *post mortem*.[61] The dominant view was that the soul fell into a state of lethargy or 'soul sleep' when the body died, owing to the soul's dependence upon it for its motive and perceptive functions.[62] The more radical possibility was that the soul ceased to exist altogether and dissolved back into dust with the blood as in the case of animals.[63] On occasion, the so-called philosophers' arguments recall Aristotle's definition of the soul as the form that endowed the body with growth, perception, and reason, with only a controversial claim to separate existence. Indeed, Constas has suggested that Eustratius's opponents were in fact Aristotelian rationalists influenced by the sixth-century medical tradition.[64]

In reply, Eustratius adduced a raft of authorities from the Old and New Testaments, including the apparition of Jeremiah to the Jewish army in 2 Maccabees and of Moses and Elijah at Jesus' Transfiguration.[65] Citations follow from the Fathers—Athanasius, Chrysostom, the Cappadocians, Cyril of Alexandria—with Eustratius making particular use of patristic saints' *Lives* where they are available, such as

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[60] Eustratius of Constantinople, *Stat. anim.* = CCG 60:50–60: *Τινὲς τῶν περὶ λόγους ἐσχολακότων καὶ φιλοσοφεῖν εθελόντων περὶ τῶν ἀνθρωπίνων ψυχῶν, οἵ καὶ τὴν περὶ αὐτῶν ἀμφισβήτησιν ποιούμενοι, διϊσχυρίζονται λέγοντες ὅτι μετὰ τὴν τοῦ βίου τοῦδε μετάστασιν καὶ τὴν τῶν ψυχῶν ἀπὸ τῶν σωμάτων ἀναχώρησιν, ἀνενέργητοι μένουσι καὶ αὐταὶ αἱ ψυχαί, εἴτε ἁγίαι, εἴτε ἄλλως πῶς ὑπάρχουσιν· κἂν οὖν φαίνονταί τισιν αἱ τῶν ἁγίων ψυχαί, κατ᾽ οὐσίαν ἢ ὕπαρξιν ἰδίαν ὡς αὐτοὶ φασὶν οὐ φαίνονται, δύναμις δέ τις θεία σχηματιζομένη, ψυχὰς ἁγίων ἐνεργούσας δείκνυσιν· ἐκεῖναι γὰρ ἔν τινι τόπῳ εἰσί, μηδέποτε δυνάμεναι μετὰ τὴν τοῦ σώματος ἐκδημίαν ἐν τῷδε τῷ βίῳ τισὶν ἐμφανίζειν.*

[61] Constas (2002) 273 n. 14.

[62] Eustratius of Constantinople, *Stat. anim.* (CCG 60:131).

[63] Eustratius of Constantinople, *Stat. anim.* (CCG 60:158–79).

[64] Constas (2002) 281.

[65] Maccabees = *Stat. anim.* (CCG 60:409–28); Transfiguration = *Stat. anim.* (CCG 60:553–75).

Gregory of Nyssa's *Life of Gregory the Wonderworker* and *Life of Macrina*, Athanasius's *Life of Antony,* and a Greek version of Jerome's *Life of Paul of Thebes*.[66] Eustratius sought to demonstrate that both the Bible and the Fathers confirmed the soul's—and, specifically the saints'—*post-mortem* activity. Owing to the soul's inactivity *post mortem*, the rationalists most provocative claim was that the saints were unable to intercede for the living or perform the miracles and apparitions that earth-bound supplicants hoped of them. On the contrary, the rationalists claimed that, insofar as such miracles and apparitions occurred, God or angels assumed the saints' form.[67] Eustratius rejected these claims outright and called his opponent's hypothesis a kind of deception, likening any notional assumption by God or an angel of the saints' appearance to the scandalous activities of stage-actors and ventriloquists.[68] From his biblical and patristic authorities Eustratius deduced that the saints' souls were not only active after death; rather, their souls were already in heaven *before* the Last Judgement since it was in God's presence and in cooperation with him that the saints could perform their miracles. But Eustratius also argued that activity *post mortem* was not restricted to the souls of the saints but was a property of all souls. For this reason, Eustratius appears to advance as a corollary that the souls of sinners were punished, apparently in hell, immediately following the body's death without awaiting the Last Judgement.[69] In this sense, Eustratius's treatise served not only as an apology for the saints' cult. Implicitly, it also represented a positive attempt to bring added clarity to Christian doctrines on the afterlife.

Just how expansive and threatening the rationalists' criticisms were can be gauged from the fact that the final (albeit incomplete) chapter of Eustratius's treatise is devoted to rebutting the philosophers' concomitant argument that, since souls were inactive *post mortem*, prayers and Eucharistic offerings for the dead were useless.[70] The obvious outcome of this was the deprivation of the church of any traffic in the (often very lucrative) economy of the afterlife—arguably, the *point sensible* of the whole affair.[71] Significantly, the care of the dead also represents the ultimate destination for Gregory's discussion of the saints' miracles in the *Dialogues*.

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[66] References to these can be easily found using the critical apparatus provided in *Stat. anim.* (CCG 60).

[67] On this notion, see also Krausmüller (2008 and forthcoming). I thank Dr Krausmüller for kindly supplying me with a copy of the second of these articles.

[68] Eustratius of Constantinople, *Stat. anim.* (CCG 60:1659–94). We may note in passing that Eustratius failed to explain how he believed disembodied souls appeared in bodily form without adopting a similar 'holy deception': Eustratius of Constantinople, *Stat. anim.* (CCG 60:2005–35). On this problem, see Dagron (1991) 31–3; and Dal Santo (2011*a*). see also Krausmüller (1997 and 1997/98).

[69] Eustratius of Constantinople, *Stat. anim.* (CCG 60:2049).

THE SAINTS' MIRACLES IN GREGORY THE GREAT'S *DIALOGUES*

In the discussion that follows, it will be readily perceived that Gregory the Great's *Dialogues* are a carefully crafted collection of miracle narratives. Each of these, moreover, is prepared for by, or itself prepares for, one of Deacon Peter's questions, which, when examined carefully, appear to have echoed many of the anxieties about the saints' cult that Eustratius countered in Constantinople—at least so far as Gregory's second dialogue is concerned.[72] Peter's most important questions concerning sainthood appear in the second dialogue, or *Life of Benedict*, a text which has been described as the 'favoured site of Gregory's reflection on the figure of the holy wonder-worker'.[73] Once his doubts have been resolved, however, Peter commended the saints' cult to the *Dialogues*' original audience. It can be argued that in the third dialogue especially, Peter actually serves to model an attitude of correct piety towards the saints.[74] He exclaimed, for instance, that '[t]he works of the saints as you relate them are marvellous indeed and this weak generation of ours must stand amazed at them.' But it is significant that even here the text's fundamental point of reference remained latent doubt.[75]

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[70] Eustratius of Constantinople, *Stat. anim.* (CCG 60:2342–726).

[71] Dagron (1992) 65 col. 1. On the recitation of individual names, see Rebillard (2003) 186; Constable (2000) 177–80.

[72] For example, causation and miracles: Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 1.2.7 (SC 260:28); the saints' prayers and predestination: *Dial.* 1.8.5 (SC 260:74); Jesus' miracles: *Dial.* 1.9.6 (SC 260:80); the rights of the Devil: *Dial.* 1.10.7 (SC 260:98); Christ and the saints: *Dial.* 2.8.8–9 (SC 260:164–66); the saints' mental state: *Dial.* 2.21.3 (SC 260:198–200); saintly visions, whether real presence or illusion: *Dial.* 2.22.4 (SC 260:204); the saints' powers beyond the grave: *Dial.* 2.23.6 (SC 260:208); the saints' foreknowledge: *Dial.* 2.30.2 (SC 260: 220–22); the saints, prayer and miracles: *Dial.* 2.32.4 (SC 260:228–30); miracles at martyrs' shrines: *Dial.* 2.38.2 (SC 260:246); martyrs and the saints: Dial. 3.26.7 (SC 260:370).

[73] De Vogüé, SC 251:108: 'le lieu privilégié de la réflexion de Grégoire sur la figure du saint thaumaturge'.

[74] See Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 3.13.4 (SC 260:302), 3.22.4 (260:358), 3.30.7 (SC 260:382), 3.35.6 (SC 260:406).

According to his own testimony, Gregory's sources for this Life were the stories of Benedict's disciples themselves, many of whom, following the destruction of Benedict's monastery at Monte Cassino by the Lombards in 577, were received as refugees at Gregory's monastery on the Caelian Hill.[76] It was in this setting that Gregory became familiar with the traditions handed down about the great ascetic, traditions which, it is argued here, he then sought to understand in the light of questions being raised about the miracles of the saints across the East Roman world at the end of the sixth century. Born *circa* 480, Benedict emerged in Gregory's telling as the scion of a distinguished family from Umbria, who, when sent to Rome to acquire a traditional education, suddenly abandoned his studies for a life of prayer. Fleeing to the countryside with his nurse, Benedict was subsequently initiated into the ascetic life by a monk named Romanus at Subiaco, where he performed a number of early miracles. As Benedict's fame grew, he attracted disciples and founded monasteries throughout central Italy. During his lifetime Benedict was said to have performed some thirty-six miracles which became crucial to Gregory's portrait, and only two chapters in his Life of the saint failed to include miracles. Indeed, providing a theology for saintly thaumaturgy appears to have represented Gregory's underlying purpose in his composition of Benedict's biography.[77]

This is immediately discernible in an early cycle of miracle narratives that effectively explored whether God or man should be thought of as constituting the agent of a saint's miracles. Thus, when a mountain-top monastery had difficulty obtaining water, Benedict prayed and a spring welled up on the summit. Yet Gregory described Benedict as attributing the miracle to God rather than to himself. As he said to his monks in advance: 'You will see that almighty God has the power to bring forth water even from that rocky summit and in

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[75] Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 3.19.5 (SC 260:348): *Mira sunt ualde sanctorum facta, quae narras, et praesenti infirmitati hominum uehementer stupenda.*

[76] See Leyser (2000*a*) 131–2.

[77] De Vogüé, SC 251:106: 'Grégoire porte son attention sur les miracles de Benoît et ne l'en détourne plus jusqu'à la fin du livre'. De Vogüé (1976) also offers a different interpretation [= SC 251:100–1].

His goodness relieve you of the hardship of such a long climb'.[78] In chapter six, a monk was reported to have been clearing land that bordered a local lake when he dropped the blade of his scythe into the water.[79] When Benedict thrust the handle into the water, however, the blade rose to the surface, but without, on this occasion, any mention of God's invervention. Conversely, in the miracle story that immediately followed, when a neophyte fell into the same lake, Benedict perceived the boy's misfortune in a vision and dispatched a monk who saved the neophyte by walking on the surface of the water. At this point, the text reported, a debate erupted over which party should be recognized as responsible for performing the miracle, Benedict or his disciple.[80] But Gregory affirmed that it was the rescued boy himself who settled the affair by confirming that, as he was being pulled from the water, he saw Benedict's cloak floating over his head and, as he said, 'he [was] the one I thought was bringing me to shore.'[81]

With both God and Benedict portrayed as legitimate agents of miracles, the *Dialogues* already seem to reflect Eustratius's notion of synthesis: the power to work miracles properly belonged to God; but saints could also claim a decisive, human role. In the cycle's final miracles, a crow saved Benedict by removing a poisoned loaf sent to him by a jealous local priest. The priest was struck dead, but Benedict nevertheless expressed sorrow for his enemy's demise. Without knowledge of the contemporary debate at Constantinople, in which, as we have seen, one party sought to attribute the saints' miracles to the activity of God or the angels, the significance of these stories from the second dialogue could go unobserved. But that the origins of the saints' miraculous powers was at the forefront of the text's purpose is clear when Gregory fleshed out his commentary on these five early miracles of Benedict's. Deacon Peter perceived the parallels between all five of these miracle narratives and the Old and New Testaments. He noted:

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[78] Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 2.5.3 (SC 260:154): *Valet enim omnipotens Deus etiam in illo montis cacumine aquam producere, ut uobis laborem tanti itineris dignetur auferre.*

[79] Given that the monk is said to have been a Goth, this story is often adduced as evidence of Gregory's ambivalent attitude towards the Goths relative to his consistently negative view of the Lombards. If the latter remain always outsiders to his world, Goths could cross the frontier that separated the later-coming barbarians from Roman society: Boesch-Gajano (1979*b*) 401.

[80] In the event, of course, each humbly alleged that it was the other!

[81] Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 2.7.3 (SC 260:158): *ipsum me ex aquis educere considerabam.*

> P: What you say is astonishing and truly amazing. In the water streaming from the rock I see Moses, in the iron blade that rose from the bottom of the lake, Elisha. The walking on the water recalls St Peter, the obedience of the raven, Elijah, and the grief at the death of an enemy, David. I deduce that this man was filled with the spirit of all the righteous.[82]

Of course, biblical typologies, especially concerning Elijah and Elisha, were common in the hands of late antiquity's biblically literate hagiographers.[83] In reply, however, Gregory pointed to the Incarnation and emphasized Christ's sole presence in the saints in a way that suggested that the saints' miracles created anxiety by appearing to atomize the Godhead into a myriad of semi-divine figures:

> G: Benedict, the man of God (*vir Domini*), possessed the spirit of only one person (*unius spiritum habuit*), the One who fills the hearts of all the faithful through the grace of redemption. St John says of Him, 'There is one who enlightens every soul born into the world; he was the true light'. And again, 'we have all received something out of his abundance'. God's holy men (*sancti Dei uiri*) can perform miracles from the Lord, but they cannot hand them on to others. The only One to give his followers the power to perform signs and miracles was He who promised to give the sign of Jonah to his enemies (Matt 12.39, 16.4) [. . .].[84]

In this way, Gregory insisted that the saints' ability to perform miracles derived strictly from Christ's presence in the saints alone and that thaumaturgy was a power which saints could not pass on to other human beings. Although it has been observed that 'no other historical figure attracted Gregory's attention as did Benedict',[85] here as elsewhere in the second dialogue Gregory can be seen to have preferred not in fact to talk about Benedict, but holy men (*sancti Dei uiri*) in general, as if the Life were more an essay on the cult of saints than Benedict's personal biography. This and the rhetoric of the saints as somehow 'filled' with Christ, remain features throughout the text.

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[82] Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 2.8.8 (SC 260:164–6): *Mira sunt ut multum stupenda quae dicis. Nam in aqua ex petra producta Moysen, in ferro uero quod ex profundo aquae rediit Heliseum, in aquae itinere Petrum, in corui oboedientia Heliam, in luctu autem mortis inimici Dauid uideo. Vt perpendo, uir iste spiritu iustorum omnium plenus fuit.*

[83] Krueger (2004) 18–22; van Uytfanghe (1984) 449–87. On Elijah and Elisha's miracles, see Grottanelli (1999).

[84] *Dial.* 2.8.9 (SC 260:166): *Vir Domini Benedictus [. . .] unius spiritum habuit, qui per concessae redemptionis gratiam electorum habuit, qui corda omnium inplenuit. De quo Iohannes dicit: "Erat lux uera, quae inluminat omnem hominem uenientem in hunc mundum", et de quo rursus scriptum est: "De plenitudine eius nos omnes accepimus." Nam sancti Dei homines potuerunt a Domino uirtutes habere, non etiam aliis tradere. Ille autem signa uirtutis dedit subditis, qui se daturum signum Ionae promisit inimicis, ut coram superbis mori dignaretur, coram humilibus resurgere, quatenus et illi uiderent quod contemnerent, et isti quod uenerantes amare debuissent.*

This brings into focus what appears to have been an important source of concern for sixth-century audiences: the saints' relationship to the Godhead and the spectre of idolatry. This was also a concern in *On the State of Souls*. Eustratius portrayed the saints as dwelling in heaven after death as a result of their ascetic endeavours; indeed, the miracles they performed were perceived as proving the divine favour the saints there enjoyed. Eustratius's opponents, however, embraced what has been called the 'modalism of a single divine power', arguing that God alone could act outside nature's laws, albeit occasionally through angels.[86] The implication that Eustratius clearly took from this was that his opponents considered the saints' veneration to be actually or potentially idolatrous. In rebutting their position, Eustratius correspondingly emphasized the divine origin of the saints' miracles and contended that the saints' ability to perform them did not compromise the divine sovereignty. Reproducing the story of the dead man restored to life through contact with Elisha's bones (2 Kgs 13:20), Eustratius addressed his adversaries with the following words: 'You, my opponents, will undoubtedly say that it is the divine power that is active? I agree: who would be stupid enough to think otherwise? For He says: "I will glorify them who glorify me"'.[87] To buttress the theological credentials of saintly veneration Eustratius turned furthermore to the language of Christology as defined at the Second Council of Constantinople in 553, over which Eustratius's mentor, Patriarch Eutychius, had presided.[88] Boldly reversing the Christological paradigm, Eustratius insisted that divine and human energies cooperated to produce the saints' miracles, while leaving the saints' human subjectivity intact.[89] This cooperation thus occurred without impairing either energy and preserved the unity of the saints as human agents of their miracles. For Eustratius, it was essential that the saints should be appreciated as more than merely passive channels for divine benevolence towards humankind. On the contrary, the saints emerge from his apology as fully fledged participants in the drama of salvation who responded personally to the supplications addressed to them and determined at their own discretion whether to favour them with miracles. In this sense, Eustratius presented the saints' miracles as standing in a continuum with the Incarnation. Indeed, Eustratius maintained that the Christian veneration of the saints was legitimate because, in a very real sense, the saints were 'bearers of God'—a term he frequently employed to describe his subject in his *Life of Eutychius*.[90]

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[85] Leyser (2000*a*) 132.

[86] Constas (2002) 283.

[87] Eustratius of Constantinople, *Stat. anim.* = CCG 60:374–77: *Ερεῖτε οὖν πάντως οἱ ἀντιλέγοντες, ὥς ἡ τοῦ θεοῦ δύναμις ἐστὶν ἡ ἐνεργοῦσα. Σύμφημι κἀγω· τίς γὰρ οὕτω τυγχάνει ἀβέλτερος, ὃς μὴ οὕτω φρονεῖ*; Gregory frequently refers to Kings: Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 1.2.7 (SC 260:30); 1.7.4–6 (SC 260:68); 2.13.4 (SC 260:178); 2.21.3 (SC 260:200); 4.25.1 (SC 265:82).

Like Eustratius, Gregory strove to demonstrate that the saints' cult was not idolatrous and went to great lengths to present the saints' miracles as possessing precedents in biblical history and standing unbroken with God's activity in the Bible. Indeed, both Eustratius and Gregory quoted Christ's words in John 5.17: 'My Father has never ceased working, and I too must be at my work'.[91] On these grounds, Eustratius affirmed that 'Christ our God does not stop doing good to us who are still in this life, both through himself and through his servants and ministers', by which Eustratius clearly meant the saints.[92] For his part, Gregory cited the verse as if to authenticate the miraculous provision of oil performed by an Italian monk, Nonnosus.[93] Similarly, when Gregory later recounted a miracle modelled on Jesus' Feeding of the Five Thousand, Peter acclaimed it as

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[88] On this Council and Eutychius's role at it, see now Price (2009).

[89] Indeed, Eustratius's hagiology has been viewed as anticipating Maximus (*c*. 580–662) the Confessor's duothelite Christology: Constas (2002) 282.

[90] *θεοφόρων*: see *v. Eutych.*, CCG 25:456; 965; 1019; 2468; 2769.

[91] Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 1.7.6 (SC 260:70): *Pater meus usque modo operor, et ego operor.*

[92] Eustratius of Constantinople, *Stat. anim.* = CCG 60:793–94: *οὐ παύεται γὰρ ὁ Χριστὸς καὶ θεὸς ἡμῶν, καὶ δι᾽ ἑαυτοῦ καὶ διὰ τῶν δούλων αὐτοῦ καὶ θεραπόντων, εὐεργετῶν ἡμᾶς τοὺς ἔτι τυγχάνοντας ἐν τῷδε τῷ βίῳ.*

[93] Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 1.7.5 (SC 260:70).

'a tremendous miracle and a remarkable imitation of our Lord's example', which Gregory affirmed unequivocally: 'In this case, Peter, it was through His servant that Christ fed a large crowd with one loaf of bread. He himself had personally satisfied five thousand men with five loaves. He continues even today to multiply a few kernels of grain into a bountiful harvest'.[94] Indeed, Gregory advised his audience 'not to marvel at any power in Sanctulus himself [the author of the miracle]', but Christ in him.[95] With Sanctulus's willingness to die in another man's place, the gospel overtones were unmistakable. Similar parallels with Christ are repeated throughout the third dialogue especially.[96] But this is *imitatio Christi* of a profound order. Gregory's saints reactualized Christ's miracles, bearing the grace of the Incarnation in their very person. Constas's commentary on Eustratius's hagiology is thus as apposite for Gregory's: 'In the lavish christomimeticism of patristic anthropology, every saint becomes another Christ, the archetype of redeemed humanity'.[97]

Despite the obvious apologetic quality of many of Gregory's biblical references, some commentators have pointed to the numerous stories in the *Dialogues* with biblical models as grounds for challenging the authenticity of the text.[98] Yet biblical precedents were an integral part of the *Dialogues*' rhetoric, just as they were in *On the State of Souls*. Along with their presentation of the saints as bearers of Christ, both authors employed typological rhetoric linking the saints to the Bible to deflect the criticism that the veneration of the saints was idolatrous. Indeed, Gregory seems to have been highly conscious of the theological problem posed by the writing of hagiography. A modern Protestant theologian has written that 'no stories can nor should be permitted to usurp this perception *sui generis*, which concretely is realized in the story of the crucified God, just because such stories present themselves as exemplifications or illustrations of this uniquely perceived story. [. . .]. Precisely because God has let himself be perceived in the [story of the] Crucified One so that the crucified Christ is the true image of God (*imago Dei*), the commandment against graven images gains its most profound meaning and total focus'.[99] But Gregory's view was almost diametrically opposed to this. In a passage from the *Dialogues*' prologue that undoubtedly reflected Gregory's own views, the Deacon Peter invited the Roman bishop to turn aside from the exegesis of the Bible in order to narrate the miracles of Italy's saints. Specifically, he encouraged the bishop by affirming that '[i]nterrupting the study of the Scriptures for such a purpose should not cause grave concern, for an equal amount of edification arises from a description of miracles'.[100] The desire to reconcile the tales of the saints' contemporary miracles to precedents or analogies taken from the Bible is discernible throughout Gregory's text and can be read as a form of apologetic, as if through the *Dialogues* Gregory were reassuring his audience of the propriety of what it is tempting to call the 'late antique hagiographical project'.[101] One medievalist has argued that early Christian audiences perceived little distinction between the Bible and the Lives of the saints.[102] Eustratius and Gregory's biblical typologies, however, if part of an apologetic rhetoric designed to allay anxiety about the idolatrousness of the saints' cult, conversely suggest that sixth-century Christians were well aware of the potential discontinuity between the Bible and Lives of the saints and were even anxious about it.

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[94] Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 3.37.8 (SC 260:416): P: *Mira res, atque in exemplo dominici operis uehementer stupenda: Dial.* 3.37.8.

[95] Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 3.37.18 (SC 260:424): *Nihil in hac re in Sanctulo mireris, sed pensa, si potes, quis ille spiritus fuerit, qui eius tam simplicem mentem tenuit, atque in tanto uirtutis culmine erexit. Vbi enim eius animus fuit, quando mori pro proximo tam constanter decreuit, et pro temporali uita fratris unius despexit suam [. . .].*

[96] Gregory the Great, 2.8.8–9 (SC 260:164–66), 2.23.6 (SC 260:208–10), 3.1.8 (SC 260:264), 3.17.5 (SC 260:340), 3.21.4 (SC 260:354), 3.31.8 (SC 260: 388–90), 3.37.19 (SC 260:242). On the apologetic value of Christ-typologies in the Lives of the saints, see Krueger (2004) 20, 25–27.

[97] Constas (2002) 283. Compare the primarily moral value of the *imitatio Christo* of contemporary Merovingian hagiography: van Uytfanghe (1987) 71–102.

[98] Notably, Clark (1987) and (2003).

Urging proper humility upon those who questioned the church's teaching concerning the saints also played a significant part in Gregory's response to the cult's critics. Gregory believed firmly that it was through the saints that Christ, in his Incarnation, could be apprehended by the faithful. To scoff at the saints was, therefore, tantamount to scoffing at the whole system of belief established by Christ.[103] A passage from the first dialogue exemplified just how closely Gregory understood God to dwell in the saints. When a travelling musician was killed by a falling stone after interrupting a bishop at lunch, Gregory explained this as resulting from God's immanent presence in the holy man's body. The saints, Gregory asserted, were nothing less than God's temples (*templa dei*) on earth. When Deacon Peter questioned the justice of this event, Gregory's reply was simple:

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[99] Jüngel (1983) 313. The problem also worried Athanasius of Alexandria. see Brakke (1995) 244: 'The Word of God remains at the centre of Athanasius's theology, no matter what form it takes: even his biography of Antony is not so much the story of Antony as it is of the Word's work through Antony'.

[100] Gregory the Great, *Dial.* Prol. 9 (SC 260:16): P: *[. . .] neque [. . .] interrumpere expositionis studium graue uideatur, quia non dispar aedificatio oritur ex memoria uirtutum. In expositione quippe qualiter inuenienda atque tenenda sit uirtus agnoscitur, in narratione uero signorum cognoscimus inuenta ac retenta qualiter declaratur. Et sunt nonnulli quos ad amorem patriae caelestis plus exempla quam praedicamenta succendunt.*

[101] See also van Uytfanghe (1989) 175–6, (1987) 36–40.

[102] Boureau (1993) 10.

> G: You see, Peter, great reverence is due to holy men because they are the temples of God (*templa enim Dei sunt*). When a holy man is provoked to anger, no less a person is angered than He who dwells in that temple. We must, therefore, fear the anger of the just from a firm conviction that the One who is present in them has full power to inflict whatever vengeance He may choose.[104]

This was not unjust, but part of a divine ordering of the Church which sceptics of the saints should humbly accept. For Gregory, the saints were thus more than exemplars; they were signs of the presence of God in the church, playing what frequently appears to have been a sacramental role in the economy of salvation. This was because the saints constantly displayed in their bodies and miracles the changed order of creation after the Incarnation.[105] Although all believers had 'received from his [Christ's] abundance', as Gregory stated above, defenders of the saints were nonetheless constrained to admit that some, namely the saints, had received rather more.[106] 'It is very edifying', Gregory wrote elsewhere, 'to see men working miracles, for in its citizens on earth we gain a glimpse of the heavenly

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[103] Compare Victricius of Rouen's 'radically incarnational theology': Hunter (1999) 428.

[104] Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 1.9.9 (SC 260:84): *Qua in re, Petre, pensandum est, quantus sit sanctis uiris timor exhibendus; templa enim Dei sunt. Et cum ad iracundiam sanctus uir trahitur, quis alius ad irascendum nisi eius templi inhabitator excitatur? Tanto ergo metuenda est ira iustorum, quanto et constat quia in eorum cordibus ille praesens est, qui ad inferandam ultionem quam uoluerit inualidus non est.* The idea of the saints as 'temples of God' is an allusion to 1 Co 6.18.

[105] Dagens (1977) 109.

[106] Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 2.8.9 (SC 260:166).

Jerusalem'.[107] A flicker, perhaps, in Gregory's text of the celestial and ecclesiastical hierarchies he had learnt from pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, the saints' miracles possessed a sacramental quality, imparting grace by revealing the Kingdom of God among humankind.[108]

Yet contemporaries evidently required clarification of such a high view of the saints. In chapters twelve to sixteen of the second dialogue, Gregory inaugurated a cycle of vision and prophecy miracles, affirming that, early in his ministry, 'Benedict began to manifest the spirit of prophecy by foretelling future events and by describing to those who were with him what they had done in his absence.'[109] But Peter consistently probed the underlying nature of the relationship between God and the saints which accounts of such miracles presupposed—the central problem that Eustratius at Constantinople also addressed. Benedict's 'spirit of prophecy' was manifested in the *Dialogues* when Gregory narrated a pair of miracle stories in which Benedict miraculously discerned the meal which a group of his disciples stopped to take at the house of a local woman, and the refreshments that a pilgrim enjoyed while on his journey to visit the saint despite a vow of fasting. Despite Gregory's prior affirmation that in Benedict the spirit of Christ alone dwelt, to Deacon Peter these stories 'prove[d] that the servant of God possessed the spirit of Elisha. He, too, was present with one of his followers who was far away (2 Kgs 5.25–7).'[110] But the pope had greater miracles to recount and Gregory related how, during an interview with the Gothic king, Totila († 552), whose successful campaigns almost brought about the extinction of Justinian's recently retrieved Italian province, Benedict foretold both his capture of Rome in 546 and his ultimate demise. Gregory also told how, in the hearing of a friendly bishop, Benedict had prophesied that

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[107] *Dial.* 3.35.6 (SC 260:406): *Magna vitae aedificatio est uidere uiros mira facientes, atque in ciuibus suis Hierusalem caelestem in terra conspicere.*

[108] On Gregory's use of the pseudo-Dionysian legacy, see Micaelli (1992) esp. 49–50; Dagens (1981) 249; and compare Leyser (2000*a*) 184.

[109] Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 2.11.3 (SC 260:174): *Coepit uero inter ista uir Dei etiam prophetiae spiritu pollere, uentura praedicere, praesentibus absentia nuntiare.* In fact, it is worth noting that each story in the 'cycle' also represents a mode of saintly prophecy enumerated by Gregory in his *Homilies on Ezekiel*: prophecy of the future; prophecy of events beyond the range of the saint's physical senses; and the ability to read other peoples' thoughts. See Doucet (1976) 169–70.

[110] Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 2.13.4 (SC 260: 178): *Ego sancti uiri praecordiis Helisei spiritum uideo inesse, qui absenti discipulo praesens fui.*

'Rome will not be destroyed by the barbarians'. Rather, it would, the saint foretold, 'be shaken by tempests and lightnings, hurricanes and earthquakes, until finally it lies buried in its own ruins.'[111] In Gregory's view, his audience in Rome possessed their own proof of the reliability of the holy man's prophecies: 'The meaning of this prophecy is perfectly clear to us now. We have watched the walls of Rome crumble and have seen its homes in ruins, its churches destroyed by violent storms, and its dilapidated buildings surrounded by their own debris.'[112]

But some in Gregory's Rome clearly did question the foundation of these tales of saintly foresight. Thus, when Gregory described how Benedict exorcized a cleric sent to him by a local bishop on the condition that he seek no further advancement in holy orders, he also affirmed that Benedict had prophesied that, should the cleric later break this command, he would be repossessed. Naturally, the holy man's prophecy came to pass. In response to this story and those before, however, Deacon Peter probingly commented that: 'The servant of God, it seems to me, must even have been aware of the hidden things [of God]'.[113] To this Gregory replied, upholding both the saints' miracles of prophecy and their special relationship with the Godhead with biblical authority: 'Why would a person who has observed the commandments of God not also know of God's secret designs? "The man who unites himself to the Lord becomes one spirit with him (1 Cor 6.17)", as we read in sacred Scripture'.[114] In many ways, the series of questions and answers between Gregory and Peter on this subject lay at the heart of the second dialogue and Gregory's reflection on the figure of the thaumaturge through his telling of the *Life of Benedict*. Indeed, it is significant that once again Gregory's discussion should explicitly concern 'holy men' (*sancti uiri*) generally of which Benedict as the dialogue's subject only emerged as an example.

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[111] Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 2.15.3 (SC 260.184): *Roma a gentibus non exterminabitur, sed tempestatibus, coruscis et turbinibus ac terrae motu fatigata, marcescet in semetipsa.*

[112] Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 2.15.3 (SC 260.184): *Cuius prophetiae mysteria nobis iam facta sunt luce clariora, qui in hac urbe dissoluta moenia, euersas domus, destructas ecclesias turbine cernimus, eius aedificia, longo senio lassata, quia ruinis crebrescentibus prosternantur uidemus.*

[113] Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 2.16.3: P: *Iste uir, ut uideo, etiam secreta penetrauit, qui perspexit hunc clericum idcirco diabolo traditum, ne ad sacrum ordinem accedere auderet.*

[114] Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 2.16.3 (SC 260:186): G: *Quare diuinitatis secreta non nosset, qui diuinitatis praecepta seruaret, cum scripsit sit: "Qui adhaeret Domino, unus spiritus est?"*

Peter continued to question Gregory about the saints' ability to foresee the future, asking:

> P: If everyone who unites himself to the Lord becomes one spirit with him (*unus fit cum domino spiritus*), what does the renowned apostle mean when he asks, 'Who has ever understood the Lord's thoughts, or been his counsellor?' (Rom 11.34) It seems unfitting to be one spirit with a person (*unus factus fuerit*) without knowing his thoughts.[115]

To this, Gregory replied that:

> G: Holy men (*sancti uiri*) do know the Lord's thoughts insofar as they are one with him (*in quantum cum domino unum sunt*). For the apostle says, 'Who else can know a man's thoughts except the man's own spirit who is within him? So, no one else can know God's thoughts but the Spirit of God' (1 Cor 2.11–12). For this reason Paul added: 'And what we have received is no spirit of worldly wisdom; it is the Spirit that comes from God (1 Cor. 2.9–10)'.[116]

In other words, in respect of such miracles of saintly prophecy, Gregory argued that the saints' prophetic powers derived from the union of their minds with God's. God was naturally omniscient, although the saints in their humanity were not; access to the mind of God through union with him thus enabled the saints to have access to his thoughts and accurately predict what would come to pass in the future.

But the ongoing exchange demonstrated that, for critics, Gregory's proposed 'union' appeared inadequate to explain the miraculous powers attributed to the saints. Deacon Peter, for example, repeatedly found the witnesses of Scripture produced by Gregory to be incompatible. He thus questioned Gregory's authorities:

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[115] Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 2.16.4 (SC 260:186–88): P: *Si unus fit cum Domino spiritus, qui Domino adhaeret, quid est quod iterum isdem egregius praedicator dicit: "Quis nouit sensum Domini, aut quis consiliarius eius fuit?" Valde enim esse inconueniens uidetur, eius sensum, cum quo unum factus fuerit, ignorare.*

[116] Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 2.16.4 (SC 260:186–88): G: *Sancti uiri, in quantum cum Domino unum sunt, sensum Domini non ignorant. Nam isdem quoque apostolus dicit: 'Quis enim scit hominum, quae sunt hominis, nisi spiritus hominis, qui in ipso est? Ita et quae Dei sunt, nemo cognouit, nisi spiritus Dei'. Qui, ut se ostenderet nosse quae Dei sunt, adiunxit: "Nos autem non spiritum huius mundi accepimus, sed spiritum qui ex Deo est".*

> P: If the things of God were revealed to the apostle by the Spirit of God, why did he comment on the verse I just cited, saying: 'O greatness of riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How inscrutable are his judgements, how unsearchable his ways!' (Rom 11.33)? But another question just occurred to me now as I was speaking. In addressing the Lord, David the Prophet declares, 'With my lips I have pronounced all the judgements of thy mouth' (Ps 118.3). Since it is less to know something than to declare it, how is it then that St Paul calls the judgements of God inscrutable, whereas David says he not only knows them all but has even pronounced them with his lips?[117]

On one level, Peter's objections here testified to the biblical literacy of the group Peter represented. But this group also clearly queried why hagiographers so often appeared inconsistent in their portrayal of the saints' miracles. That is to say, they objected that the saints sometimes seemed conspicuously to *lack* the prophetic powers that were the supposed fruit of their unique relationship with the Godhead. Few (if any) hagiographers claimed that their subjects foresaw the future all the time.[118] Indeed, the problems raised by the saints' trumpeted ability to foresee the future were common to the saints' thaumaturgic powers generally, which likewise came and went. Even for saints accustomed to perform them, miracles remained miraculous.

For Gregory, the vitiating factor which critics of the saints overlooked was the saints' continued attachment to a material body. The movements of the flesh occasionally mitigated the saints' enjoyment of their miraculous powers, without however altering the saints' ontological standing with God. Gregory's own paradigm for the saints' union with God was intended to take account both of the claims of hagiographers and also of the logical inconsistency apparent to some in the saints' miracles. This is well expressed in the response he offered to Peter's last objection:

> G: I have already answered both of these objections when I told you just before that holy men (*sancti uiri*) know the Lord's thoughts insofar as they are one with the Lord (*cum domino sunt*). For all who follow the

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[117] Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 2.16.6 (SC 260:188): P: *Sed rursum mihi haec dicenti alia suboritur quaestio. Nam Dauid propheta Domino loquitur, dicens: 'In labiis meis pronuntiaui omnia iudicia oris tui'. Et cum minus sit nosse quam etiam pronuntiare, quid est quod Paulus inconprehensibilia esse Dei iudicia asserit, Dauid autem haec se omnia non solum nosse, sed etiam in labiis pronuntiasse testatur.*

[118] See especially the *Life of Symeon the Younger* considered in Chapter Three of this book.

> Lord wholeheartedly are also wholeheartedly with God (*cum deo*), but as long as they are still weighed down with corruptible flesh they are not with God. So, to the extent that they are united (*coniuncti*) with God they know his hidden judgements; to the extent that they are disunited (*disiuncti*) with him, they do not know them. Since even holy men cannot yet perfectly penetrate the secret designs of God, they call his judgements inscrutable. However, since they are united to God in their minds and are enlightened by dwelling continually on the words of Holy Scripture and whatever private revelations they may receive, they understand God's judgements and pronounce them. Therefore, the judgements God conceals, they do not know; those which he reveals, they do know.[119]

In other words, to Gregory, the saints were and were not yet one with God. The saints' union with the Godhead was total but incompletely realized before their glorification *post mortem*.[120] Prophecy, like all thaumaturgic ability, could be described as part of the personal 'miraculous deposit' that resided in the human nature of the saints as a result of the saints' union with God, made possible through the Incarnation and as a function of the saints' ascetic achievements. The saints' union with God, and hence their potential ability to perform miracles, was constant, but their ability actually to draw on the thaumaturgical powers that inhered in their 'miraculous deposit' varied through time according to the saints' individual struggle with the flesh.

In many ways, Gregory's paradigm here resembles Eustratius's careful balancing of divine and human energies in the saints, as does Gregory's insistence that the saints' union with God (Eustratius would say *συνεργία*) did not impugn divine sovereignty, but actually spared the saints' cult from idolatry. Indeed, Gregory went on to prove his meaning by offering a number of stories from Benedict's Life. In the first, a man hid one of the barrels of wine given to him as a donation to Benedict's monastery: when he presented the single barrel to the saint, Benedict miraculously warned him not to drink from the one he had hidden. The man later found that the barrel was filled with a snake.[121] In the second story, a disciple sent to preach to a neighbouring community of nuns illegitimately accepted the gift of some handkerchiefs, of his knowledge of which sin Benedict immediately informed his disciple upon his return.[122] In a third, Benedict foresaw the miraculous arrival of two hundred measures of flour at a monastery during a period of famine in the Roman Campania.[123]

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[119] Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 2.16.7 (SC 260:190): G: *Ad utraque haec tibi superius sub breuitate respondi, dicens quod sancti uiri, in quantum cum Domino sunt, sensum Domini non ignorant. Omnes enim qui deuote Dominum sequuntur, etiam deuotione cum Deo sunt, et adhuc carnis corruptibilis pondere grauati, cum Deo non sunt. Occulta itaque Dei iudicia, in quantum coniuncti sunt, sciunt; in quantum disiuncti sunt, nesciunt. Quia enim secreta eius adhuc perfecte non penetrant inconprehensibilia iudicia esse testantur. Quia uero ei mente inhaerent, atque inhaerendo uel sacrae scripturae eloquiis uel occultis reuelationibus, in quantum accipiunt, agnoscunt, haec et norunt et pronuntiant. Iudicia igitur, quae Deus tacet nesciunt, quae Deus loquitur, sciunt.*

[120] The importance of the flesh–spirit divide is characteristic of Gregory's thought: Dagens (1977) 187–9; Straw (1988) 128. It had important implications for his Christology: Bélanger (1995).

But Gregory's explanation did not, however, satisfy Peter who asked: 'Tell me, I ask you whether it must be believed that the spirit of prophecy always remained with this servant of God, or did the spirit of prophecy only fill his mind from time to time?'[124] Of course, this objection was scarcely different from the last of Peter's, but it enabled Gregory to advance a further argument in explanation of the saints' apparently inconsistent thaumaturgy. This time Gregory argued that God cooperated with sinful human beings in a way that reflected both his love for humankind (by honouring the unworthy with his presence) and his desire to keep those whom he honoured humble:

> G: The spirit of prophecy does not enlighten the minds of the prophets constantly, Peter. It is written that the 'Spirit breathes where He pleases (John 3.8)', and we must realize that He also breathes *when* He pleases. [. . .] God arranges all of this out of the dispensation of his great love. This is so that by granting and withdrawing the spirit of prophecy He both raises the minds of the prophets to the heights and preserves them in humility. Thus, when they receive the spirit they learn what they are by God, but when they do not have the spirit of prophecy they recognize what they are by themselves.[125]

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[121] *Dial.* 2.18.

[122] *Dial.* 2.19. see also a similar story in Gregory's *ep.* 11.26; also Dal Santo (2010).

[123] *Dial.* 2.21.

[124] Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 2.21.3 (SC 260:198–200): P: *Dic, quaeso te: numquidnam credendum est huic Dei famulo semper prophetiae spiritum adesse potuisse, an per interualla temporum eius mentem prophetiae spiritus inplebat?*

[125] Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 2.21.3–4 (SC 260: 200): G: *Prophetiae spiritus, Petre, prophetarum mentes non semper inradiat, quia, sicut de sancto Spiritu scriptum est: "Vbi uult spirat," ita sciendum est quia et quando uult adspirat. [. . .] Quod omnipotens Deus ex magnae pietatis dispensatione disponit, quia dum prophetiae spiritum*

To put it differently, the saints' occasional inability to foresee the future demonstrated their ultimate dependence upon God; indeed, Gregory could contend that it was this humility that truly made them saints. This echoed the paradoxes of the moral theology found throughout Gregory's exegetical works. The saints' humility was equally, however, a function of Gregory's understanding of the saints as miniature 'Christs', as representatives of a humanity deified by the Incarnation and its own ascetic struggle with the flesh. This was because Gregory conceived of the Incarnation as, above all, God's voluntary self-humbling *condescensio*, the Latin equivalent for the Greek *κένωσις*.[126] This neatly allowed both the incarnational and moral planes of Gregory's hagiology to overlap, so that even the saints' very inability sometimes to perform miracles was a sign of the special divine grace present in them by union with God. Because God was humble, so were his saints. Although Peter subsequently affirmed that 'it is as you say, reason itself recommends it',[127] we are entitled to wonder how convincing Roman critics of the saints found this explanation.

There are good reasons why the saints' ability to foresee the future should have been such a subject of contention among Gregory's circle at Rome during the last decade of the sixth century. Prophecy constituted a strikingly important motif in a number of Greek saints' Lives produced during this period. The ability to foresee future events featured prominently in Eustratius's *Life of Eutychius* (composed after 582) and in the anonymous *Life of St Symeon the Younger* (*c.* 602–10). In both of these Lives, the saints' prophetical miracles attracted important political implications. Eutychius's successful foretelling of the accession to the throne of the Emperors Justin II (567–78), Tiberius (578–82) and Maurice (582–602) was crucial to Eustratius's defence of his subject's holiness, and similar prophecies

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aliquando dat et aliquando subtrahit, prophetantium mentes et eleuat in celsitudine et custodit in humilitate, ut et accipientes spiritum inueniant quid de Deo sint, et rursum prophetia spiritum non habentes cognoscant quid sint de semetipsis. Italics in Zimmerman's translation.

[126] Straw (1988) 172–3; Markus (1997) 27. It has been asserted that, in this emphasis on the moral implications of the Incarnation as *condescensio*, Gregory anticipated Maximus the Confessor (*c.* 580–662): see Dagens (1977) 437. On the Roman context for Maximus's thought, see Booth (2008).

[127] Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 2.21.5 (SC 260:200): *Ita hoc esse ut adseris, magna ratio clamat.*

were attributed to St Symeon the Younger by his anonymous hagiographer and Evagrius Scholasticus.[128] Indeed, Eustratius was probably motivated to claim this particular miraculous ability for Eutychius precisely in order to counter the prophecies attributed to Symeon, who was an ally of Eutychius's rival and interim successor as patriarch, John the Scholastic (565–77).[129] Both Lives, like that of the equally prophetic Theodore of Sykeon in the early seventh century, display just how far the cult of certain saints had become implicated in imperial politics around the time of the *Dialogues*' appearance.[130] But the worldly ramifications of many contemporary saintly prophecies may also have generated wide discussion about the authenticity of these miracles, even in Rome where the emperors' election by God (as the holy man's prophecy confirmed) was no less significant than at Constantinople.[131] From his time as *apocrisarius* at Constantinople and the extensive contacts he maintained in the capital after his return to Rome, Gregory cannot have failed to keep abreast of these claims of highest-level saintly prophecies. Indeed, it is significant that Rom 11.34 ('Who has ever understood the Lord's thoughts, or been his counsellor?'), the verse that first prompted Peter to call Gregory's tales into question, also featured prominently in Eustratius's *Life of Eutychius* in a passage that immediately followed the latter's prophecy of Maurice's accession in 582, when Gregory was himself in Constantinople.[132] For its part, Evagrius Scholasticus's *Ecclesiastical History*, which attributed this same prophecy to the supporter of Eutychius's sainted rival, Symeon, most likely appeared in 593–4, the year of the *Dialogues*' own composition, as we have seen.[133]

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[128] Eutychius's prophecies: Eustratius of Constantinople, *V. Eutych* = CCG 25:1850–82 (Justin II); 25:1883–1893 (Tiberius II); 25:1900–45 (Maurice). On these and Evagrius's tales of prophecy, see Cameron (1988) 240–1. For Symeon the Younger's prophecies of imperial and patriarchal accessions, see *Life of Symeon the Younger*, c. 205–6 = *Vie ancienne de S. Syméon stylite le jeune* (521–592), P. van den Ven (ed.) (Brussels, 1962–70), I: 178 (John Scholasticus) [= II: 203] and I: 178 (Justin II) [= II: 204]; and Evagrius Scholasticus, *Ecclesiastical History* 5.21 (Maurice), 6.23 (Patriarch Gregory of Antioch), J. Bidez and L. Parmentier (eds.) (London, 1898), 217, 239 = Whitby, *The Ecclesiastical History of Evagrius Scholasticus* (Liverpool, 2000), 284 (with n. 79), 315.

[129] Cameron (1988) 236; and van den Ven (1965).

[130] Theodore prophesied the accession as well as the downfall of Maurice: see *Life of Theodore of Sykeon*, cc. 54, 119–20 in A.-J. Festugière, *Vie de Théodore de Sykéôn*, Subsidia Hagiographica 48 (Brussels, 1970), 95–7 = E. Dawes and N. Baynes, *Three Byzantine Saints* (Oxford, 1948), 126–7, 167–8. For imperial patronage of the saints' cult, see Cameron (1979*b*) and Whitby (1988) 22–3, who both emphasize Maurice's reign. See also Dal Santo (2011*c*) and the conclusion to this study.

[131] On the ongoing importance of the emperor at Rome into the seventh century, see Humphries (2007). On imperial building projects as an expression of sovereignty at Rome during this period, see Coates-Stephens (2006).

In this sense, Gregory's *Dialogues* can be read as reflecting, but as also seeking to allay, the doubts which the role of prophecy in the often politically motivated hagiography of the late sixth century possibly provoked. But reports of saintly prophecy and vision miracles were also problematic inasmuch as they suggested the saints' omniscience in a setting where the mental state of Christ during his Incarnation was itself the subject of fierce debate. While both Eustratius and Gregory presented Christ as the archetype for the saints' miraculous powers, the degree of Christ's access to the mind of God was hotly disputed during the 590s, particularly in Egypt where a miaphysite sect that denied the omniscience of the Incarnate Word argued in favour of what was quickly labelled and denounced as the 'agnoete heresy'.[134] But the debate was not confined to Egypt. Gregory personally condemned the agnoetes in a letter to Patriarch Eulogius of Alexandria (580–607) in 600.[135] Be that as it may (and there is little in the *Dialogues* to suggest that Christ's omniscience was questioned at Rome),[136] what is crucial is that, as a conceit of contemporary hagiographical discourse, the saints' alleged prophecies and visions appear to have focalized existing anxieties about the nature of the saints' relationship to the Godhead.

Gregory spelt out the incarnational underpinnings of his vision of the saints and their miracles clearly. Of Benedict, as of all the saints, Gregory believed that 'his everyday conversation was scarcely empty of the weight of miracles, for words never escape in vain from the mouth of one whose heart is fixed on things above.'[137] The truth of this was displayed by a further miracle. When Benedict threatened to excommunicate two high-born nuns because of their callous treatment of a servant, they died soon after, having failed to amend their ways. Thereafter, their souls were seen rising from their tombs whenever the Eucharist was celebrated in the church where they were buried, as though the souls of the unreconciled nuns remained under the ban of the holy man's threatened excommunication. At last, this was reported to Benedict. The holy man then blessed an oblation of bread and sent it to be offered for the nuns in the Mass. Their souls were no longer seen to leave the church. With the nuns' souls thus so clearly absolved, Gregory commented: 'From this, it is indubitably clear that they received communion with the Lord by the servant of the Lord'.[138] Modern commentators have raised questions about Benedict's authority, as a lay holy man, to intervene in sacramental ritual.[139] This seems to miss the point that most exercised contemporaries, however, since for Peter the problem lay rather with the saints' intercessionary powers beyond the grave and the challenge this presented to Christian eschatology. He affirmed:

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[132] Eustratius of Constantinople, *V. Eutych.* = CCG 25:1966–7.

[133] Whitby, *Evagrius*, xx.

[134] See MacCoull (2006) 414. Further on the agnoetes, see van Roey and Allen (1994).

[135] Gregory the Great, *ep.* 10.21. There is discussion in Demetracopoulos (2005) esp. 121, although the author seriously underestimates Gregory's ability to understand the Greek debate.

[136] But see *Dial.* 1.9.6 (SC 260:80) where Deacon Peter questioned Christ's omnipotence.

[137] Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 2.23.1 (SC206: 204): *Vix ipsa [. . .] communis eius locutio a uirtutis erat pondere uacua, quia cuius sese in alta suspenderat, nequaquam uerba de ore illius incassum cadebant.*

> P: It is truly extraordinary that a man still abiding in this corruptible flesh, however holy and revered he may have been (*quamuis uenerabilem et sanctissimum uirum*), could absolve souls already judged at God's invisible tribunal.[140]

Peter's scruples here recall Eustratius's opponents in *On the State of Souls*. As we have seen, Eustratius saw his opponents' rejection of the saints' ongoing psychological activity *post mortem* as undermining the church's sacramental authority beyond the grave, including the prayers and oblations offered for the sake of the dead.[141]

To defend Benedict's actions in absolving the nuns' souls, Gregory pointed to the authority 'to bind and loose' given by Christ to St Peter, whom Gregory here takes as archetypal of all the saints and holy men Benedict represented. Indeed, Gregory went so far as to present the saints' miracles as symbolic of the sacramental ministry of the church's priests and bishops, which relied on the same economy between spirit and flesh, inaugurated by Christ's Incarnation, as the saints' miraculous powers.[142] This was because the authority 'to bind and loose' that Christ bequeathed to St Peter reflected the radical re-ordering of the economy of spirit and flesh established through the Incarnation. Gregory affirmed:

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[138] Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 2.23.5 (SC 260:208): *indubitanter patuit [. . .] communionem a Domino per seruam Domini recepissent.*

[139] Clark (2003) 100: 'It was indeed a major theological anomaly to attribute to an unordained abbot the power of binding and loosing beyond the grave'.

[140] Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 2.23.6 (SC 260:208): *Mirum ualde quamuis uenerabilem et sactissimum uirum, adhuc tamen in hac carne corruptibili degentem, potuisse animas soluere in illo iam inuisibili iudicio constitutas.*

[141] Dagron (1992) 65 col. 1.

> G: Was he [St Peter] not still in the flesh who heard the words, 'Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven?' (Matt 16.19). Those who hold holy governorship over faith and morals receive the power of binding and loosing in his place. In fact, the Creator of heaven and earth came down from heaven to earth in order that earthly man should have such power. God having been made flesh for man's sake, God deigned to lavish this on flesh, that flesh should judge spirits. From this our weakness rose above itself: that the strength of God was weakened beneath itself.[143]

In other words, Gregory's saints could 'judge spirits' because God had become flesh; in Christ, flesh bore God and the flesh of the saints, indwelled by Christ, now enjoyed all Christ's authority. The natural order of creation was reversed. To Gregory, the saints thus embodied the sacramental nature and priestly role of the Church as a whole in the re-ordered creation, both in this life and the next. Indeed, in the miracle story that follows this one in the second dialogue, the earth was said to have rejected a deceased monk's body until Benedict buried communion bread with it, a gesture which combined his own

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[142] On the implications of Christology for patristic representations of the saints, see Williams (1999).

[143] Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 2.23.6 (SC 260:208–10): *Numquidnam, Petre, in hac adhuc carne non erat qui audiebat: "Quodcumque liguareris super terram, erit ligatum in caelis, et quae solueris super terram, soluta erint in caelis"? Cuius nunc uicem et ligando et soluendo obtinent, qui locum sancti regiminis fide et moribus tenent. Sed ut tanta valeat homo de terra, caeli et terrae conditor in terram uenit e caelo, atque, ut iudicare caro etiam de spiritibus possit, hoc ei largiri dignatus est, factus pro hominibus Deus caro, quia inde surrexit ultra se infirmitas nostra, unde sub se infirmata est firmitas Dei*. Eustratius repeatedly likened Eutychius to St Peter in his *Life*: Eustratius of Constantinople, *v. Eutych* = CCG 25:673–81 (Justinian sees St Peter in a vision choosing Eutychius as patriarch), 898–902 (Eutychius's flock is the same as that which Christ committed to St Peter), 2037–41 (an angel saves Eutychios, 'imitator of Peter', *τὸν ζηλωτὴν Πέτρου*). Compare Gregory and Eustratius's use of the Old Testament figure, Job: Müller (2009) 106.

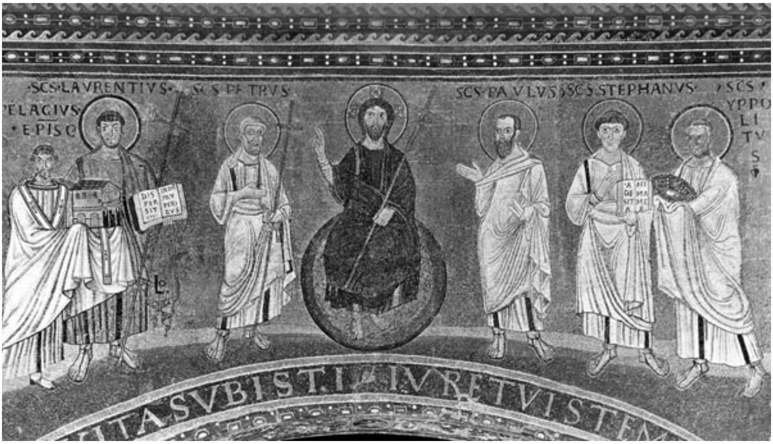

Fig. 1. San Lorenzo fuori le mura. Sixth-century mosaic depiction of Christ, the Apostles Peter and Paul, the martyrs Lawrence and Stephen and the bishops Hippolytus and Pelagius II (579–90). Photo: Carla Faldi Guglìelmì, Roma. Basilica di S. Lorenzo al Verano, Grafica Edìtorìale spa-Bologna.

charisma with the priestly act of consecration. Gregory affirmed: 'Now, Peter, you can appreciate how pleasing this holy man was in God's sight. Not even the earth would retain the young monk's body until he had been reconciled with the blessed Benedict.'[144] Signs of God's 'lavishing', the saints and their miracles were sacraments in the new economy of spiritual flesh. Indeed, it was arguably this economy that the mosaic erected by Gregory's predecessor as pope, Pelagius II, at the newly constructed *ad corpus* basilica of St Lawrence (San Lorenzo fuori le mura) visualized with its suggestive association of Christ, Sts Peter and Paul, martyr and Roman bishop.[145]

The church's disputed authority over the souls of the deceased had been fiercely contested earlier in the century with the posthumous condemnation of Theodore of Mopsuestia at the Second Council of

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[144] Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 2.24.2 (SC 260:212): *Perpendis, Petre, apud Iesum Christum Dominum cuius meriti iste uir fuerit, ut eius corpus etiam terra proiecerit, qui Benedicti gratiam non haberet.*

[145] See Fig. 1. On Pelagius's renovation, see Brandenburg (2005) 87–8. Contact relics from Lawrence's shrine featured among the gifts Gregory sent to correspondents: Leyser (2000*b*) 301.

Constantinople in 553.[146] The debate touched Eustratius's patron directly since Eutychius largely owed his election as patriarch to his successful justification of *post-mortem* anathematization by reportedly referring in Justinian's presence to King Josiah's desecration of the tombs of Jewish idolaters (3 Kgs 13.2).[147] Defending the Council's actions thus probably hovered behind Eustratius's apology for the soul's activity beyond the grave,[148] and anxiety over the propriety of that council's actions may also be reflected in Gregory's defence of Benedict's absolution of the nuns' souls. As we shall see, this simultaneously rendered Gregory's second dialogue an apology for the church's prerogatives beyond the grave, which, like Eustratius's arguments in *On the State of Souls*, was based on logic distilled from a certain view of the Incarnation. Indeed, although Francis Clark has argued against the authenticity of the *Dialogues* partly on the grounds that Popes Gelasius (492–6) and Vigilius (537–55) did not admit the church's power to absolve or condemn the dead, Gregory certainly agreed that the church *did* possess the power to 'bind and loose' *post mortem* when as Pelagius II's (579–90) *apocrisarius* in Constantinople he defended the authority of the council of 553 in a letter to the Istrian bishops.[149] As pope, Gregory continued to view subscription to the decrees of that council as a prerequisite for orthodoxy,[150] and the same principle—of the sacramental authority of the church over the souls of the deceased—was at stake in

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[146] For the vigorous debate about the rights of the church over the souls of the deceased, see Price (2009) 1: 178–81; and Maas (2003) 51–2, 58–60. On the aims of this council more generally, see Meyendorff (1968). For its reception in the west, compare Grillmeier (1953) and Sotinel (2005).

[147] Eustratius of Constantinople, *V. Eutych.* = CCG 25:619–27. For commentary, see Cameron (1988) 228–9. Evagrius Scholasticus also recorded the story: Allen (1981) 203.

[148] Constas (2002) 268. For further evidence of Eustratius's view of the saints' authority to 'bind and loose', see Eustratius of Constantinople, *V. Eutych.* = CCG 25:1644–7.

[149] See Meyvaert (1995). For Gregory and the condemnation of the 'Three Chapters', see Straw (2007) esp. 146–7. On the ('Istrian') schism between Rome and the northern Italian bishops, see Sotinel (2007) esp. 108: 'The defence of the Three Chapters did not [. . .] express any opposition to the imperial conception of the relations between political power and religious authority.'

[150] Markus (1997) 125–42; and Coates-Stephens (forthcoming). I thank the latter for kindly providing me with a copy of his article in advance of publication.

Gregory's story concerning his own *post-mortem* absolution of the monk Justus in the fourth dialogue.[151]

By proposing the Incarnation as the basis of the saints' miracles, moreover, Gregory departed from Augustine's views in the *City of God*, and decidedly entered upon the territory of early Byzantine reflection on the saints. For Augustine it was Christ's Ascension into heaven that guaranteed the power of the martyrs' relics.[152] For Gregory and other early Byzantine writers, however, what mattered was God's original descent. In the sixth century, Cyril of Scythopolis began his *Life of Euthymius* by recalling the Incarnation while, at the beginning of the seventh, the author of the *Life of Theodore of Sykeon* depicted the saint's birth through the imagery of a 'very large and brilliant star descending from heaven into [his mother's] womb'.[153] Like Eustratius's defence of both the visions of the saints and prayer for the dead, Gregory elided saint and sacrament in a radical vision of the transformative impact of the Incarnation. This special 'religious aesthetic' endowed the *Miracles of the Italian Fathers* with the character of a sacramental tract reflecting a distinctive, early Byzantine vision of the nature of God's engagement with the world.[154] Arguably, this vision was reflected in the architecture of Rome's martyrial basilicas, many of which were richly renovated during the late sixth and early seventh centuries. With these *ad corpus* shrines, it has been said that, 'we have entered an altogether more "sacramental" world', expressed in the saints' dazzling mosaics, where '[t]he columns draw the eye [. . .] from the figure floating above, to the altar, which itself is placed directly above the relics below'.[155] Certainly, the power of the presiding clergy and their bishop was only enhanced by this vivid association with the charisma vested in the relics of the saints beneath the Eucharistic altar. How universally this view was shared should not, however, be pressed too far since it clearly required Gregory's (and, indeed, Eustratius's) apology. Indeed, it was telling of the contested nature of both the saints' and the church's authority that when he gave his account of Eutychius's miraculous healing of a blind man, Eustratius also invoked Matt 16.19 as justification.[156]

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[151] Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 4.57.15 (SC 265:192). On the unity of these stories, compare Duval (1988) 165–8. See further the following chapter, 132–3.

[152] Augustine, *De ciuitate Dei* 22.9.1–3 = Loeb, vol. 7, 250 (CCL 48:827). It has been suggested that the Incarnation was an area where Gregory displayed theological originality independent of Augustine: Dudden (1905) 2: 337.

[153] *Life of Euthymius* = E. Schwartz, *Kyrillos von Skythopolis*, Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur 4:4 (Leipzig, 1939) 6–7; English: *Lives of the Monks of Palestine*, ed. J. Binns and trans. R. Price (Kalamazoo, 1991) 2–3. *Life of Theodore of Sykeon = Vie de Théodore de Sykéôn,* ed. A.-J. Festugière, Subsidia Hagiographica 48 (Brussels, 1970) 3–4; English: *Three Byzantine Saints*, ed. E. Dawes and N. Baynes (Oxford, 1948) 88.

[154] For some of the contours of Gregory's 'sacramental vision' of creation, see Straw (1988) 47–65. To Gregory, the Incarnation restored the state of 'spiritual flesh' man enjoyed before the Fall: Bélanger (1995) 84. For a hagiographical aesthetics, see Cox Miller (2000) esp. 233–6 and (2004).

That this vision was contested within sixth-century society explains why Gregory manipulated the dialogue to address tensions which some in his audience perceived in the interaction of divine and human energies in the saints' miracles. We have already seen how an early cycle of miracle stories in the second dialogue sought to attribute the holy man a direct role in the miraculous event, with Gregory affirming that such thaumaturgical abilities flowed directly from Christ's in-dwelling within 'God's holy men' (*sancti Dei uiri*). In the latest cycle of miracles, Gregory emphasized the miraculous properties of Benedict's own person when he described how a man with leprosy was brought to Benedict 'who put the disease to flight with a touch of his hand.'[157] Then, somewhat differently, when famine threatened the survival of a monastery in Campania, it was Benedict's ardent prayers to God over an empty cask of oil miraculously that brought about its abundant overflow. In a final demonstration of Benedict's extraordinary miracles, Gregory related how he exorcized an old monk through a simple strike to the cheek. But these stories prompted Peter to explore further the origins of the saints' thaumaturgical powers. In their next exchange, Peter questioned whether the saints performed their miracles in their own right or whether, in view of Benedict's apparent need to obtain God's assistance through prayer in the miracle of the oil above, it was not really God who performed miracles in response to the saints' intercessions. 'I would like to know', he asked, 'whether he [Benedict] always obtained these miracles by prayer (*uirtute orationis*), or did he sometimes perform them by his will alone (*solo uoluntatis nutu*)?'[158]

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[155] Brown (2003) 28–9, commenting on the basilica of Sant'Agnese fuori le mura (Via Nomentana), erected by Honorius I (625–38). See also Thacker (2007).

[156] Eustratius of Constantinople, *v. Eutych* = CCG 25:1644–7.

[157] Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 2.27.3 (SC 260:216): *mox ut eum contigit, omnem cutis illius uarietatem fugauit.*

In reply, Gregory endeavoured to uphold both divine sovereignty and the personal miraculous agency of human saints by asserting that the saints performed their miracles in both manners. He affirmed:

> G: They who cling to God with a devout mind commonly perform miracles in both of these ways, Peter, when need demands; sometimes they work certain miracles through prayer (*ex prece*), sometimes through their own power (*ex potestate*). Since John says that 'all those who welcome him he empowered to become the children of God,' what wonder is it if they who are children of God can work signs and wonders in their own power (*ex potestate*)?[159]

Turning once again to the 'Prince of the Apostles' as a model, Gregory then provided evidence of this through the 'signs and wonders' performed by St Peter: his resurrection of Tabitha by prayer (Acts 9.40); and the condemnation of Ananias and Sephira by will (Acts 5.1–11). But Gregory also pointed to two further miracles of Benedict: 'One of them shows the efficacy of his prayer; the other, the marvellous powers that were his by God's gift.'[160] He related how on one occasion, the saint freed a Roman prisoner from Gothic captivity through no more than a glance at his captors. Gregory emphasized his point:

> G: So you see, Peter, what I said is true. Those who devote themselves wholeheartedly to the service of God can sometimes work miracles by their own power. Blessed Benedict checked the fury of a dreaded Goth without even rising to his feet, and with a mere glance unfastened the heavy cord that bounds the hand of the innocent man. The very speed with which he performed this marvel is proof enough that he did it by his own power (*ex potestate*).[161]

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[158] Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 2.30.2 (SC 260:220): P: *Velim nosse, haec tanta miracula uirtute semper orationis impetrabat, an aliquando etiam solo uoluntatis exhibeat nutu?*

[159] Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 2.30.2 (SC 260:220–22): G: *Qui deuota mente Deo adhaeret, cum rerum necessitas exposcit, exhibere signa modo utroque solent, ut mira quaeque aliquando ex prece faciant, aliquando ex potestate. Cum enim Iohannes dicat: 'Quotquot autem receperunt eum, dedit eis potestatem filios Dei fieri', qui filii Dei ex potestate sunt, quid mirum si signa facere ex potestate ualent?*

[160] Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 2.30.4 (SC 260:222): *in quibus aperte clareat aliud hunc accepta diuinitus ex potestate, aliud ex oratione potuisse.*

[161] Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 2.31.4 (SC 260:226): *Ecce est, Petre, quod dixi, quia hii, qui omnipotenti Deo familiarius seruiunt, aliquando mira facere etiam ex potestate possunt. Qui enim ferocitatem Gothi terribilis sedens repressit, lora uero nodosque*

He also reported a second occasion where, by contrast, Benedict appeared to have had to resort to obtaining God's direct intervention through intercession. The miracle concerned the resuscitation of a dead boy brought to Benedict's monastery by his father. When the man asked the saint to restore his son to life, the holy man replied that '[s]uch a miracle is beyond our power. The holy Apostles are the only ones who can do this.'[162] But he prayed over the boy: 'O Lord', he said, 'do not consider my sins but the faith of this man who is asking to see his son alive again, and restore to this body the soul You have taken from it.'[163] According to Gregory, life returned to the child's body as soon as Benedict ended his prayers; indeed, 'no one present there could doubt that this sudden stirring was due to a heavenly intervention.' 'Obviously, Peter', he commented further, '[Benedict] did not have the power to work this miracle himself. Otherwise, he would not have begged for it prostrate in prayer.'[164]

Of course, miracles of both these kinds were part of the 'stock in trade' of Christian hagiography in late antiquity. But this exchange between Gregory and his interlocutor in the second dialogue demonstrates how far the audiences of the saints' reported miracles sought clarification of the nature of the saintly thaumaturgy at the end of the sixth century, especially regarding the degree of any 'miraculous deposit' residing autonomously, as it were, in the saints' own human nature. Clearly, with these foregoing tales, Gregory upheld both the reality of that divine deposit in the saints, but also their ongoing dependence upon and subjection to God as the ultimate fount of their thaumaturgical powers. Indeed, Gregory's second miracle story above recalled Eustratius's description in his *Life of Eutychius* of his patron's similar resuscitation of a dead boy 'by the grace

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ligaturae, quae innocentis brachia adstrinxerant, oculis dissoluit, ipsa miraculi celeritate indicat quia ex potestate acceperat habere quod fecit.

[162] Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 2.32.2 (SC 260:228): *Haec nostra non sunt, sed sanctorum apostolorum sunt.*

[163] Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 2.32.3 (SC 260:228): *Domine, non aspicias peccata mea, sed fidem huius hominis, qui resuscitari filium suum rogat, et redde in hoc corpusculo animam, quam abstulisti.*

[164] Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 2.32.4 (SC 260:228): *Liquet, Petre, quia hoc miraculum in potestate non habuit, quod prostratus petiit ut exhibere potuisset.*

of God *and* the prayers of the holy man'.[165] Other hagiographers at this time would explore the same nexus.[166]

The *Dialogues* thus seem to manifest that the question concerning the human reality of the saints' miracles was as vexed at Rome as it was at Constantinople. Critics of the saints seem to have claimed that their miracles were not really performed by the saints themselves as human agents, but only appeared to be, as the truly active force remained God who responded to their prayers. But Gregory's second dialogue ruled out any possibility of denying the active role of the saints' humanity in their miracles in favour of God's activity alone. This was why Gregory attributed to the saints a miraculous power that was their own to use without recourse to God through prayer. Prayer alone arguably implied a too strict distinction between divine and human energies and downplayed divine immanence in the saints in a way that was an affront to Gregory's understanding of the 'descent' of God in the Incarnation, which, as we have seen, had the effect of 'raising' human nature to the level of the divine and of thereby endowing the saints' humanity with a direct thaumaturgical capacity of its own. From a perspective like this, there can be no doubt that, to use Eustratius's terms, the saints of Gregory's *Dialogues* were truly active 'in their own substance'. Peter's distinction between a power inherent in the holy man himself and a divine power drawn on externally through prayer was reminiscent of the controversy reflected in *On the State of Souls*. Here, as we have seen, Eustratius insisted that the saints' *post-mortem* miracles occurred in and through the saints' own personal substance, whereas his opponents argued that their miracles were produced by God or an angel that assumed the saints' form, thereby downplaying the saints' own human contribution to the miraculous event. They thus maintained that, although the faithful might believe in beholding visions of the saints, in actuality God or one of his angels impersonated the saint. Eustratius rejected this suggestion as 'playacting' unworthy of God and steadfastly argued that, on the contrary, the 'souls of the saints appear in their own substance [*κατ’ οὐσίαν ἰδίαν*]'.[167] Through the principle of cooperation (*συνεργία*), however, Eustratius argued in favour of the equal contribution made by both divine and human energies as active elements in the saints' miracles.

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[165] Eustratius of Constantinople, *v. Eutych* = CCG 25:1398–99: *διὰ τῆς τοῦ θεοῦ χάριτος καὶ τῶν εὐχῶν τοῦ ἁγίου ἀνδρὸς.*

[166] See especially the discussion of the *Miracles of Cosmas and Damian* and the *Life of St Symeon the Younger* in Chapter Three of this book.

[167] Eustratius of Constantinople, *Stat. anim.* = CCG 60:442–44: *αἱ τῶν ἁγίων ψυχαὶ κατ’ οὐσίαν ἰδίαν παροῦσαι.* And again in terms of 'energies', Eustratius of

Both Eustratius and Gregory were, however, sensitive to their opponents' criticisms, and readily admitted limits upon what the saints could do. Thus, Eustratius conceded that 'neither the holy angels, nor the souls of the saints [. . .] can ever perform their visions or carry out their activities against God's command. They are servants and they carry out his commandments with fear'.[168] And elsewhere he asserted that:

> No man, *whether he exists in the body or out of it* (2 Cor 2.12), can do anything at all without God's cooperation. Indeed, all rational, thinking creatures, whether they are angels or souls, sent by God for his service, act in cooperation with him to do what has been commanded of them.[169]

Gregory made a similar point in response to Peter's next question, whose presence in the second dialogue itself suggested that tales of the saints' miracles raised questions at Rome regarding the scope of their powers and its implications. Recalling the anxieties Eustratius addressed at Constantinople, Peter asked:

> P: Will you please tell me now whether holy men can always carry out their wishes, or at least obtain through prayer whatever they desire?
>
> G: Who, Peter, has ever been more heavenly in this life than St Paul? Yet he prayed three times to the Lord about the sting in his flesh and could not obtain his wish. In this connection I must tell you how the saintly Benedict once had a wish he was unable to fulfil.[170]

Constantinople, *Stat. anim.*, CCG 60:943–45: *Καὶ αὗται ποῦ πάντως εἰσὶν αἱ ἐμφανίζουσαι, κἂν εἰ ὁ θεὸς δι᾽ αὐτῶν ἐνεργῶν τὰς χάριτας δίδωσιν τοῖς αὐτον ἐπικαλουμένοις.*

[168] Eustratius of Constantinople, *Stat. anim.* = CCG 60:445–48: *Οὔτε δὲ οἱ ἅγιοι ἄγγελοι, οὔτε αἱ τῶν ἁγίων ψυχαὶ θεοῦ κελεύσεως διχὰ τὰς ἐμφανείας ἤγουν τὰς ἐνεργείας ποιοῦνται ποτέ· δοῦλοι γὰρ ὄντες, τὰ προστασσόμενα μετὰ φόβου ἀποπληροῦσιν.*

[169] Eustratius of Constantinople, *Stat. anim.* = CCG 60:1626–30: *Οὐδὲ γὰρ ἄνευ τῆς τοῦ θεοῦ συνεργείας δύναταί τι ποιεῖν ἄνθρωπος, εἴτε ἐν σώματι, εἴτε ἐκτος τοῦ σώματος ὑπάρχει· πάντα γὰρ τὰ λογικά τε καὶ νοερά, εἴτε ἄγγελοι, εἴτε ψυχαί, εἰς διακονίαν ὑπὸ θεοῦ πεμπόμενα, τῇ αὐτοῦ συνεργείᾳ πράττει τὲ ποιεῖ κατὰ τὰ προσταττόμενα αὐτοῖς.*

[170] Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 2.33.1 (SC 260:230): P: *Sed quaeso te indices, si sancti uiri omnia quae uolunt possunt, et cuncta inpetrant quae desiderant obtinere.* G: *Quisnam erit, Petre, in hac uita Paulo sublimior, qui de carnis suae stimulo ter Dominum rogauit, et tamen quod uoluit obtinere non ualuit. Ex qua re necesse*

In Gregory's reply, we can observe that although the pope championed a view of the saints' miracles as at least partly the result of an autonomous thaumaturgical deposit, he knew that the powers that flowed from that deposit could not be infinite. The problem was how to define the limits that constrained them while maintaining the ontological reality of the saints' personal miraculous agency.

Once again Gregory sought both biblical authority (hence the reference to Paul's 'thorn in the side', 2 Cor 12.7) and a more recent demonstration from Benedict's miracles, in this case the holy man's final meeting with his sister, Scholastica. A nun since childhood, Scholastica used to meet with the saint once a year a short distance from the entrance to his monastery at Monte Cassino. At the end of their meeting on this occasion, Scholastica sought to detain her brother despite the saint's desire to regain his monastery. Disregarding Benedict's protestations, Scholastica applied herself to prayer and a thunderstorm suddenly broke that prevented the holy man from carrying out his desire.[171] For Gregory, the story's underlying logic was clear. He affirmed:

> Here you have my reason for saying that this holy man was once unable to obtain what he desired. [. . .] this wish of his [to return to the monastery] was thwarted by a miracle almighty God performed in response to a woman's prayer. It is not surprising that the woman proved mightier than Benedict, she who had long desired to see him. According to John's testimony, 'God is love' (1 John 4.8, 16). She prevailed by this just judgement, since she loved more'.[172]

For some commentators the episode represents a pagan intrusion into the *Dialogues*.[173] As part of a sustained series of questions and answers clarifying the saints' powers, however, the meaning of Gregory's narrative must have been plain to the monks of

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est ut tibi de uenerabili patre Benedicto narrem, quia fuit quiddam quod uoluit, sed non ualuit inplenere.

[171] Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 2.33.4 (SC 260:232).

[172] Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 2.33.5 (SC 260:232–34): *Qua de re dixi eum uoluisse aliquid, sed minime potuisse, quia, si uenerabilis uiri mentem aspicimus, dubium non est quod eandem serenitatem uoluerit, in qua descenderat, permanere. Sed contra hoc quod uoluit, in uirtute omnipotentis Dei ex feminae pectore miraculum inuenit. Nec mirum quod plus illo femina, quae diu fratrem uidere cupiebat, in eodem tempore ualuit. Quia enim iuxta Iohannis uocem 'Deus caritas est', iusto ualde iudicio illa plus potuit, quae amplius amauit.*

[173] Boesch-Gajano (1979b) 405; and Clark (2003) 106–9.

St Andrew's.[174] The saints did not act as 'free agents'; their activities were constrained by God's moral character—hence the reference to St John. For, just as the Incarnation provided the basis for a relationship between flesh and spirit that established the ontological foundations of the saints' cult, so it founded a moral order that conditioned the scope of their miracles. Gregory had already expressed this idea in terms of humility; now it was expressed in terms of love. In the light of the criticisms which Eustratius addressed at Constantinople, Gregory can thus be seen to have striven to save the saints' cult from the charge of idolatry by conceding limitations upon the scope of their powers and their ultimate subjection to God's overarching sovereignty—nor was he alone in doing so at the turn of the sixth century.[175]

VISIONS OF THE SAINTS

So far, we have argued that Gregory the Great's *Dialogues on the Miracles of the Italian Fathers*, and especially the second dialogue, or *Life of Benedict*, should best be understood as an attempt to think through and address anxieties about the cult of the saints present in Gregory's circle at Rome at the end of the sixth century, whose nature bears comparison to a near contemporary debate at Constantinople about the saints' miracles most clearly reflected in Eustratius of Constantinople's *On the State of Souls after Death*. The connection between between Gregory's reflection on the saints' miracles and the discussion at the imperial capital can be further appreciated in respect of Gregory's treatment of the nature of the saints' apparitions. As we have seen, at Constantinople Eustratius especially addressed those who rejected the saints' ability to appear, in their own personal substance (or souls), to believers through visions at their shrines, and who instead attributed the apparition to God or an angel that assumed the saints' appearance.[176] Crucially, in the second dialogue

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[174] See also de Vogüé (1972).

[175] See esp. the discussion of Sophronius of Jerusalem's *Miracles of Cyrus and John* in Chapter Three of this book.

[176] Such miracles were particularly associated with the shrines dedicated to deceased saints. For example, the apparitions of Euthymius and Sabas: *Life of Euthymius* 57–58 = Schwartz, *Kyrillos*, 78–82; Binns and Price, *Lives*, 76–80; *Life of Sabas* 79, 80

Gregory also devoted a story to defending the full subjective reality behind the saints' apparitions, albeit through a vision performed by a saint, not from heaven, but still here below. Thus, in chapter twenty-two, Gregory described Benedict as sending two disciples away to found a monastery at a location some thirty miles from Monte Cassino, simulaneously assuring them that he would come on a specific day to give instructions for the monastery's layout. Before dawn on the day of Benedict's scheduled visit, however, both disciples saw the holy man in a dream, talking and showing them 'exactly where each section of the monastery should stand'. Erroneously, neither disciple thought to take it as fulfilment of the saint's promise to visit them. Gregory wrote:

> When the day passed without any word from the man of God, they returned to him disappointed. 'Father', they said, 'we were waiting for you to show us where to build, as you assured us you would, but you did not come'.
>
> 'What do you mean', he replied. 'Did I not come to you as promised?'
>
> 'When did you come?' they asked.
>
> 'Did I not appear to both of you in a dream as you slept and indicate where each building was to stand? Go back and build as you were directed in the vision'.[177]

Gregory thus emphasized the equivalence between the appearance of Benedict in an apparition and a visit by him in the flesh, thus intervening, apparently directly, in the debate underway at Constantinople. Because this debate hinged on whether the appearances of the saints were real or illusory, Gregory's account of Benedict's vision underscored that the instructions his disciples received were as good as if delivered in Benedict's fleshly presence. Despite their failure

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and 82 = Schwartz, *Kyrillos*, 195–87; Binns and Price, *Lives*, 194–96. Note also the appearances of Ss George, Christopher, Cosmas and Damian to Theodore of Sykeon: *Life of Theodore of Sykeon* 7, 39, 46, 63 = Festugière, *Vie*, 6–7, 34–36, 41, 52–53; Dawes and Baynes, *Byzantine Saints*, 91, 115–16, 121–22, 132.

[177] Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 2.22.3 (SC 260:202): *Cumque uir Dei constituto die minime uenisset, ad eum cum moerore reuersi sunt, dicentes: 'Exspectauimus, pater, ut uenires, sicut promiseras, et nobis ostenderes, ubi quod aedificare deberemus, et non uenisti.' Quibus ipse ait: 'Quare, fratres, quare ista dicitis? Numquid, sicut promisi, non ueni?" Cui cum ipsi dicerent: "Quando uenisti?,' respondit: 'Numquid utrisque uobis dormientibus non apparui et loca singula designaui? Ite, et sicut per uisionem audistis, omne habitaculum monasterii ita construite.'*

to accept their vision of Benedict as the fulfilment of the saint's promised visit, by having Benedict's disciples recognize the holy man they saw in the vision as Benedict, they implicitly recognized his subjective presence in it. Indeed, Gregory's concerns here dovetailed with a range of Greek miracle collections from the turn of the sixth and seventh centuries, preoccupied, like Eustratius in his treatise, with affirming the reality of the saints' presence in their apparitions through the identity between their appearance in a supplicant's vision and their own bodily form.[178]

Like Eustratius's adversaries at Constantinople, however, Gregory's audience at Rome appears to have been highly anxious about the plausibility of such saintly apparitions. Gregory consequently sought to justify Benedict's previous apparition by biblical authority and compared it to Habakkuk's *physical* displacement from Judea to Chaldea. Thus, in respect of the story regarding Benedict's apparition to his disciples, Peter asked:

> P: I would like to know by what arrangement it happened that Benedict could travel that distance and give these monks directions through a vision which they could hear and understand.
>
> G: What do you doubt when you consider the course of this thing, Peter? It is undoubtedly clear that the spirit is far more agile than the body. We also know on the authority of Scripture that the prophet, Habakkuk, was lifted from Judea and deposited in Chaldea in an instant, to have lunch with the prophet, Daniel, and then found himself in an instant back in Judea (Dan 14.32–8). If Habakkuk could cover such distance in a brief moment to take a meal with his fellow prophet in the body, is it surprising that father Benedict could go to his sleeping brothers [. . .] in spirit?[179]

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[178] See especially the *Life of St Symeon the Younger*, c. 231 discussed in Chapter Three of this book; also Dagron (1991) 31–3; and Dal Santo (2011*a*).

[179] Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 2.22.4 (SC 260:204): P: *Doceri uelim, quo fieri ordine potuit, ut longe iret, responsum dormientibus diceret, quod ipsi per uisionem audirent et recognoscerent*. G: *Qui est quod perscrutans rei gestae ordinem ambigis, Petre? Liquet profecto quia mobilioris naturae est spiritus quam corpus. Et certe scriptura teste nouimus quod propheta ex Iudaea subleuatus, repente est cum prandio in Chaldaea depositus, quo uidelicet prandio prophetam refecit [. . .]. Si igitur tam longe Abacuc potuit sub momento corporaliter ire et prandium deferre, quid mirum si Benedictus pater obtinuit, quatenus iret per spiritum et fratrum quiescientium spiritibus necessaria narraret*. Habakkuk's translation is in Daniel 14.32–8, according to the Vulgate, and Bel and the Dragon in the Septuagint. It is not found in the Hebrew Bible.

A further reflection of the common ground shared between Gregory and Eustratius, the Old Testament passage was also crucial for the latter's defence of the saints' *post-mortem* apparitions. Indeed, Eustratius's apology was addressed as much on behalf of apparitions of living saints, like Benedict, as on behalf of those who were deceased. Thus, in *On the State of Souls*, Eustratius argued against 'those [who] doubt, believing that it is not souls which appear, either after their departure from this life *or while the saints are still in the flesh* (*ἐπεὶ καὶ ἐν σαρκὶ ὄντας*) and counted as righteous men'.[180] 'How shall we answer?', he continued:

> First we shall say that, *All things are possible to him who believes* (Mk 9:22) and that God does lift up and relocate those who are in the flesh, wherever it pleases him, as with both Habakkuk and Philip; in the blink of an eye, he bore the one from Jerusalem to Babylon (Bel and the Dragon 34–6), and the other back he took from Gaza to Azotum and then to Caesarea (Acts 8.26, 40).[181]

Habukkuk's translation served to illustrate Gregory and Eustratius's common view of the spatially uncircumscribed nature of the saints' souls, dead or alive, and the reality of their own subjective presence as the active force in their apparitions.[182] That Benedict was still alive when he performed his apparition, while the apparitions Eustratius defended were mainly those of deceased saints *post mortem*, appears not to have been significant. On the contrary, Benedict's appearing while still in the flesh paralleled Eustratius's treatment of the scene from the *Life of Nicholas of Lycia*, where the saint, still alive, was described as appearing in a dream to the fourth-century Emperor Constantine.[183] Eustratius relied on this miracle as evidence that whatever the saints could do in this life, they could do in the next. He contended that 'just as when they were in the flesh they [the saints] performed miracles in themselves, so now they are active according to both body and soul and perform healings, even though these are separated from each other'.[184] For Eustratius and Gregory alike, therefore, the overriding point was that the saints' miraculous apparitions went unimpeded by distance, death, or any other natural obstacle.[185] And for Gregory's interlocutor in the *Dialogues*, at least, the bishop's demonstrations from the Bible were sufficient. 'Your words seem to smooth away all my doubts', Peter affirmed.[186]

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[180] Eustratius of Constantinople, *Stat. anim.* = CCG 60:1217–19: *διαποροῦντες φασὶν οἱ δοξάζοντες μὴ τὰς ψυχὰς εἶναι τὰς ἐμφανιζούσας μετὰ τὴν ἐνθένδε ἀποδημίαν, ἐπεὶ καὶ ἐν σαρκὶ ὄντας ἁγίους καὶ ἐναρέτους ἄνδρας ἐπισκεπτομένους* [. . .].

[181] Eustratius of Constantinople, *Stat. anim.* = CCG 60:1224–30: *Πρῶτον μὲν τοῦτο φαμέν, ὅτι "πάντα δυνατὰ τῷ πιστεύοντι", καὶ ἐν σώματι ὄντας μεταρσίους ποιεῖν καὶ μεταφέρειν ὅπου δ' ἂν βούλεται θεός, ὅπερ καὶ ἐπὶ τοῦ Ἀμβακοὺμ καὶ ἐπὶ τοῦ Φιλίππου πεποίηκεν· τὸν μὲν γὰρ ὡς ἐν ῥιπῇ ὀπθαλμοῦ ἀπὸ Ἱερουσαλὴμ εἰς Βαβυλῶνα, τὸν δὲ πάλιν ἀπὸ Γάζης εἰς Ἄζωτον καὶ εἰς τὴν Καισάρειαν.*

[182] The distinction appears not to have been significant as the cult of living saints set the tone for their veneration post mortem. See Rapp (2007) 548: 'acts of veneration shown to saints after their death had their origin in the connections of the faithful to living holy men'.

[183] Eustratius of Constantinople, *Stat. anim.* (CCG 60:1256–77); Constas, 'Apology', 273. Gregory's living saints and Eustratius's interest in the tombs of dead

The reassurances regarding the authenticity of the apparitions of these holy patrons and the reality of the soul's ongoing activity beyond the grave that Gregory offered in his *Dialogues* were not his only attempt to address such scepticism at Rome. It has been noted before that in his *Homilies on the Gospels*, which Gregory preached in Rome's great martyrial basilicas in 592, Gregory lamented the doubt in the existence of the afterlife that led so many of his contemporaries astray.[187] 'Some bear the name of Christian', Gregory affirmed, 'but do not have the Christian faith. They [. . .] do not desire what they cannot see because they do not suppose that it exists.'[188] To dispel such falsehood, therefore, Gregory told his audience a story he had himself heard from some of the city's aged ascetics (*religiosis quibusdam senioribus*). A pious Roman matron came often to offer prayers at the shrine of Sts Processus and Martinian. Having finished her supplications on one occasion, she went to leave the basilica when she spotted two monks clothed as pilgrims. But when she approached to

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ones neatly reverses the conventional east–west loci of the holy: Brown (1976); compare Petersen's use of this paradigm to argue for the influence of Eastern monastic literature upon the *Dialogues*: Petersen (1984) 116–19.

[184] Eustratius of Constantinople, *Stat. anim.* = CCG 60:1654–58: *Ὥσπερ τοίνυν ἐν σαρκὶ ὄντες δι᾽ αὐτῶν ἐπετέλουν τά θαύματα, οὕτω καὶ νῦν δι᾽ ἑαυτῶν ἐνεργοῦντες κατά τε ψυχὴν καὶ σῶμα, ἰάσεις παρέχονται, κἂν εἰ διῄρηνται ἀπ᾽ ἀλλήλων.*

[185] Symeon the Younger was also reported to have performed many apparitions during his lifetime. See Chapter Three of this book.

[186] Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 2.22.5 (SC 260:204): *Manus tuae locutionis tersit a me, fateor, dubietatem mentis.*

[187] See McClure (1978) 193.

[188] Gregory the Great, *Hom. Ev.* 32 in D. Hurst, *Gregory the Great: Forty Gospel Homilies* (Kalamazoo, 1990), 264. The Latin can be found in *Gregorius Magnus: Homiliae in Evangelia*, R. Étaix (ed.) CCL 141 (Turnhout, 1999), 282: *Nam sunt nonnulli qui christianitatis nomine censentur, sed christianitatis non habent fidem. Sola esse uisibilia aestimant, inuisibilia non appetunt, quia nec esse suspicantur.*

offer them alms, she realized it was the martyrs themselves. 'You are helping us now', they said to her, 'on the day of judgement we will seek you out and do whatever we can for you.'[189] Then they disappeared. For Gregory the meaning of their apparition was clear. 'I am not now saying', Gregory admonished his audience, 'that you are to believe in the life to come: those who are alive in that life have been made visible to human sight.' In other words, just as Gregory would argue at greater length in his *Dialogues*, the miracles and apparitions performed by the souls of the saints were irrefragable evidence of the soul's continued activity *post mortem*. As Gregory affirmed, '[t]he Lord, who shows us even visibly those whom he had taken invisibly to live with himself, has desired us to know rather than to believe in the life to come.'[190] Apparitions of the saints took place at his old monastery, St Andrew's on the Caelian, too. Thus, when in February 601, Gregory wrote to his friend, Rusticiana, a high-ranking noblewoman at Constantinople who sent alms for the benefit of its monks, he affirmed that 'so many are the miracles and so great the care and protection' that the Apostle Andrew lavished on the community that 'it is as if he [St Andrew] were himself the very abbot of the monastery'.[191]

POST-MORTEM ACTIVITY

The subjective presence of the saints in their apparitions, which Gregory (if not all of his contemporaries) so readily assumed at Rome, remained under a question mark into the seventh century when the matter was revisited in that century's Question and Answer literature (styled in Greek as ἐρωταπόκρισεις).[192] But for those like Eustratius and Gregory who defended the subjective reality behind apparitions of deceased saints at the end of the sixth century, the immediate entry into heaven of the saints' disembodied souls *post mortem* was perceived to be a theological necessity.[193] Only from this place of full-blooded posthumous activity could the saints' souls return to earth for the sake of the living. For its part, therefore, Eustratius's *On the State of Souls* was equally a diatribe against the notion of 'soul sleep'. According to this view, which was popular especially among Christian authors writing in Syriac, disembodied souls slumbered, after death, in a state of inactivity until the Last Judgement; only then would the soul, returned to its body, regain its dormant capacities of activity or perception.[194] But Eustratius defended the reality behind the saints' visions before the Resurrection, finding critical support in Athanasius's description in the *Life of Antony* of the great monk's visions of the souls of fellow desert hermits ascending to heaven in the company of the angels. Eustratius quoted Athanasius:

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[189] Gregory the Great, *Hom. Ev*. 32 in Hurst, *Gospel Homilies*, 265 = CCL 141, 285: *Tu nos modo uisitas, nos te in die iudicii requiremus et quidquid possumus praestatibus tibi.*

[190] Gregory the Great, *Hom. Ev*. 32 in Hurst, *Gospel Homilies*, 265 = CCL 141, 286: *Venturam ergo vitam nos Dominus magis uoluit scire quam credere, qui eos inuisibiliter recipit, apud se uiuere nobis etiam uisibiliter ostendit.*

[191] See Gregory the Great, *Ep*. 11.26. See further Dal Santo (2010).

[192] See the appendix to this book.

> Antony suddenly raised his eyes to the sky and saw something that appeared to be a soul moving towards heaven, while angels rejoiced at its approach. He was amazed at this strange sight: [. . .] he prayed that some understanding of this matter might be revealed to him. Immediately there came to him a voice, saying that this was the soul of the monk, Ammon, who lived at Nitria.[195]

Eustratius seized on this testimony, exclaiming to his opponents: 'O you people! If it is possible to watch a disembodied soul progressing into heaven, it is entirely possible for it to come back to this place when necessity demands'.[196] If the saints' souls could be seen ascending into heaven, then they could also be seen when they came back down from heaven to earth to perform miracles and apparitions on behalf of the faithful: 'Whoever beholds a righteous man's soul ascending into heaven with the power of the angels can see the same descending again from heaven with divine power flashing forth together with it.’[197] He also pointed to Antony’s vision of the heavenly ascent of the soul of another hermit from the Greek version of Jerome’s *Life of Paul of Thebes*:

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[193] Van Uytfanghe (1991) 97–8.

[194] For this belief in the Church of the East, See Chapter Four of this book.

[195] Eustratius of Constantinople, *Stat. anim.* = CCG 60:958–63: '[. . .] *καὶ ἀναβλέψας, ἴδεν ἐν τῷ ἀέρι ἀναγόμενόν τινα, πολλὴν τὲ τῶν ἀπαντώντων γινομένην τὴν χαράν· εἶτα θαυμάζων καὶ μακαρίζων τὸν τοιοῦτον χορόν, ηὔχετο μαθεῖν τίς ἂν εἴη οὗτος. Καὶ εὐθὺς ἦλθεν αὐτῷ φωνή, ταύτην εἶναι τοῦ Ἀμοῦν τὴν ψυχὴν τοῦ ἐν τῇ Νιτρίᾳ μοναχοῦ*'.

[196] Eustratius of Constantinople, *Stat. anim.* = CCG 60:970–3: *Εἰ δυνατόν ἐστιν ψυχὴν ἀσώματον εἰς οὐρανοὺς ἀνερχομένην θεωρεῖν ὦ οὗτοι, δυνατὸν ποῦ πάντως καὶ πάλιν, εἰ χρεία καλέσοι, ταύτην ἐνταῦθα παραγενέσθαι.*

> Then Antony travelled back along his way, [. . .] and he made haste to come to Paul, for he longed to see him again [. . .]. Walking for three days, [. . .] at the third hour, he [Antony] saw ahead on the road deputations of angels, and the chorus of prophets and apostles, and Abba Paul shining like snow in the midst of them and ascending with them into heaven.[198]

Picking up on Jerome’s distinction between the angels, prophets, and apostles, Eustratius made the passage a crucial authority for his contention that visions of the saints occurred in the substance of the saints’ own souls and not through the assumption of their appearance by angels. ‘Through this testimony’, he wrote, ‘it is shown that whoever has a vision of the angels, sees the angels, and whoever beholds the saints’ souls, sees the saints’ souls.’[199] The soul was both separable from the body and capable of activity even after the body’s death.

In Gregory’s fourth dialogue, Deacon Peter posed the question directly. He desired to know ‘whether the souls of the righteous are received into heaven before the return of their bodies’.[200] As we shall see in the following chapter, Gregory’s positive answer in response to this question confirmed that, like Eustratius, he understood the immediate glorification of the saints’ souls as a necessary precondition for their exceptional activity on behalf of the living from beyond the grave.[201] It is also possible to read Gregory's tales of the various miraculous visions received by Benedict and his disciples at the end of the holy man's life as intended to play the same role in Gregory's text as the *Life of Antony* and *Life of Paul of Thebes* in Eustratius's: that is to say, as vivid demonstrations of the soul's ongoing activity *post mortem*. Thus, in chapter thirty-five, Gregory related that, during a moment of intense mystical contemplation, Benedict saw the 'whole world gathered up before his eyes in what appeared to be a single ray of light'.[202] This may be interpreted as a demonstration of the saints' vision of God, which, as Gregory already asserted in his *Moralia*, was the basis for the saints' exceptional *post-mortem* activity.[203] Linking the saints' vision of God to their souls' *post-mortem* activity, moreover, Benedict then watched as the soul of Germanus, bishop of Capua, was transported to heaven by angels.[204] Two of Benedict's disciples received a similar vision when Benedict died. Gregory described the event as follows:

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[197] Eustratius of Constantinople, *Stat. anim.* = 60:1001–3: *Καὶ ὁ εἰς οὐρανοὺς ἀνερχομένην ψυχὴν δικαίου μετὰ ἀγγέλων δυνάμεως θεωρῶν, δύναται πάλιν καὶ ἐξ οὐρανοῦ ἐρχομένην θέασασθαι, μετὰ τῆς συνεξαστραπτούσης αὐτῇ δηλονότι θείας δυνάμεως.*

[198] Eustratius of Constantinople, *Stat. anim.* = CCG 60:986–97: *Καὶ ἐπορεύθη τὴν ὁδὸν αὐτοῦ Ἀντώνιος, μή λαβῶν τροφὴν μεθ’ ἑαυτοῦ παντελῶς, καὶ ταχύνας τοῦ δραμεῖν ἐπὶ τὸν μακάριον Παῦλον, ἐπιποθῶν ἰδεῖν πάλιν τοῦτον* [. . .]. *Ὁδοιπορήσας δὲ τὴν ἡμέραν ἐκείνην,* [. . .] *τῇ τρίτῃ ὥρᾳ τῆς ἡμέρας, ἴδεν τάγματα ἀγγέλων ἐπὶ τῆς ὁδοῦ, καὶ τὸν χορὸν τῶν προφετῶν καὶ ἀποστόλων, καὶ τὸν ἀββᾶν Παῦλον ἀστράπτοντα ἐν μέσῳ αὐτῶν ὥσπερ χιόνα καὶ ἀνερχόμενον μετ’ αὐτῶν εἰς τὸν οὐρανόν’*. Greek *Life of Paul of Thebes* = *Vita Pauli eremitae in Aegypti Thebaide (BHG* 1467), *Deux versions grecques inédites de la Vie de Paul de Thèbes, ed.* J. Bidez, Université de Gand: Recueil de travaux publiés par la Faculté de Philosophie et Lettres 25 (Ghent and Brussels, 1900), pp. 3–33.

[199] Eustratius of Constantinople, *Stat. anim.* = CCG 60:997–1000: *Ἰδοὺ καὶ διὰ ταύτης ἐδείχθη τῆς μαρτυρίας, ὅτι ὁ βλέπων ἀγγέλων ὀπτασίαν, ἀγγέλους ὁρᾷ, καὶ ὁ τὰς ψυχὰς τῶν ἁγίων θεωρῶν, ψυχὰς ἁγίων βλέπει* [. . .].

[200] Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 4.25.2 (SC 265:82): P: *[. . .] nosse uelim si nunc ante restitutionem corporum in caelo recipi ualeant animi iustorum.*

> They both saw a magnificent road, covered with rich carpeting and glittering with innumerable lights. It stretched eastwards from his [Benedict's] monastery in a straight line until it reached up into heaven. And there in the brightness stood a man of majestic appearance, who asked them, 'Do you know who passed this way?' They confessed that they did not. 'This', he told them, 'is the road taken by blessed Benedict, the Lord's beloved when he went into heaven'.[205]

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[201] Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 4.25.2–26.1–2 (SC 265:82–4): '[. . .] nothing is more certain than that the souls of those who have attained perfect justice are received in the kingdom of heaven as soon as they leave the body' = *[. . .] luce clarius constat quia perfectorum iustorum animae, mox ut huius carnis claustra exeunt, in caelestibus sedibus recipiuntur*. See further Chapter Two in this book.

[202] Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 2.35.3 (SC 260:238): *omnis etiam mundus, uelut sub uno solis radio collectus*. For an interpretation, see Monfrin (1991) and Leyser (2000*a*) 108, 182–4. On Gregory and contemplation, see Butler (1922) 132 ff.; and McGinn (1995).

[203] Gregory the Great, *Moralia in Iob*, 12.26 (CCSL 140A:644–45): *quae intus omnipotentis Dei claritatem uident nullo modo credendum est quia sit for aliquid quod ignorant*. See the opening paragraph of this chapter above.

[204] On Germanus, see Ridolfino (1999).

[205] Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 2.37.3 (SC 260:244): *Viderunt namque quia strata palliis atque innumeris corusca lampadibus uia recto orientis tramite ab eius cella in caelum usque tendebatur. Cui uenerando habitu uir desuper clarus adsistens, cuius esset uia, quam cernerent, inquisiuit. Illi autem se nescire professi sunt. Quibus ipse ait: Haec est uia, qua dilectus Domino caelum Benedictus ascendit'.*

The second dialogue thus concluded with two dramatic demonstrations of the saints' immediate *port-mortem* entry into heaven. The entry of Benedict's soul into heaven, especially, was depicted with certainty and splendour, a triumphant rebuttal of those who sought to reduce the saints' *post-mortem* condition to one of inactivity. Indeed, from the road leading directly from earth into heaven to the vision of the angel confirming its reception, the whole episode was an *exemplum* of Gregory's teaching that the saints' disembodied souls proceeded directly to heaven before the Resurrection.

This chapter has sought to demonstrate the extent to which the questions that structure Gregory the Great's second dialogue, or *Life of Benedict*, focus on the relationship between God and the saints. It is argued that this indicates that the text was addressed to an audience uncertain of the saints' miracles in a manner that bears comparison to the criticisms of their cult that Eustratius rebutted, more or less contemporaneously, at Constantinople. It is significant that the second dialogue actually concluded, not with Gregory's preceding account of the entry of Benedict's soul into heaven, but with a further question from the Deacon Peter, one that concerned the miracles said to be performed, *post mortem*, by the saints at their shrines. According to Gregory, when a deranged woman slept in Benedict's former cave at Subiaco, she was healed and restored to her sanity, despite the fact that Benedict's body was buried elsewhere. This was because the saint's long contact with the cave had made it a special site for miracles, a kind of 'contact relic'. But the story prompted Peter to ask the following question:

> P: How is it that, as a rule, even the martyrs in their care for us do not grant the same favours through their bodily remains as they do through their other relics? We find them so often performing more outstanding miracles away from their burial places.[206]

This question suggests that contact relics were considered a more reliable source of saintly miracles than the saints' own bodies. But there is good reason to believe that Peter's contemporaries did in fact question the efficacy of the cloths or other items placed in contact with a saint's tomb, often used by the papacy for diplomatic gifts instead of the saints' bones.[207] In June 594, Gregory declined to send St Paul's head to Empress Constantina at Constantinople, as requested. He offered as a substitute cloths placed alongside the apostle's tomb.[208] In his epistle to reassure the disappointed empress, Gregory passed on a story he had heard regarding Pope Leo the Great, who, when urged by sceptics to prove the power of contact relics, cut the cloth that had lain on a martyr's tomb with a knife. Dramatically, it bled.[209] In this sense, Gregory's tale of the woman's healing at Subiaco became further evidence that contact relics were more, not less, effective than the real thing. But the awkward positioning of this final question in the second dialogue (traditionally taken as Benedict's *Life*) further suggests that Gregory's text as a whole represented Gregory's attempt to address contemporary anxieties surrounding the saints' cult and their miracles more than merely a straightforward biography of Benedict the holy man.

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[206] Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 2.38.2 (SC 260:246): *Quidnam esse dicimus, quod plerumque in ipsis quoque patrociniis martyrum sic esse sentimus, ut non tanta per sua corpora, quanta beneficia per reliquas ostendant, atque illic maiora signa faciant, ubi minime per semetipsos iacent?*

Finally, it is significant that both Eustratius and Gregory combined their apology in favour of the saints' miracles with a defence of the Eucharist as an effective aid to the souls of the faithful departed. As we have seen, any denial of the ongoing activity *post mortem* of the human soul also threatened to undermine the church's care of the dead. Thus, in his treatise's final surviving chapter, Eustratius revealed that those who rejected the saints' *post-mortem* activity equally denied the efficacy of the church's ritual care for the dead, above all the commemoration of the deceased at the Eucharist.[210] Prompted by another question from Deacon Peter, Gregory's *Dialogues* concluded with demonstrations of the ability of the Mass to help the dead.[211] We shall deal with both Eustratius and Gregory's arguments more fully in the following chapter of this book. For the moment, it is important now merely to note how closely the interests of both churchmen overlapped, how far the intellectual debate at Rome appears to have followed that at Constantinople and, in particular, to what extent the defence of the saints' cult relied, in both cities, on invoking a certain view of the consequences of the Incarnation. For Gregory, as for Eustratius (ordained clerics alike), it was arguably the sacramental implications that flowed from contemporary critics' attempts to downplay, or deny, the extent of human thaumaturgy that motivated their stong support for a largely autonomous deposit of the divine in the human nature of the saints.

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[207] See further McCulloh (1976) and Thacker (2000) 252–3. On their role as an instrument of Gregory's diplomacy, see the excellent discussion in Leyser (2000*b*).

[208] Gregory the Great, *ep*. 4.30 (CCL 140:248–50).

[209] See further McCulloh (1980) 318, where he cites this passage from the *Dialogues* as evidence for contemporary scepticism to contact relics; also Boesch-Gajano (2004*a*) 174–5.

[210] Eustratius of Constantinople, *Stat. anim.* = CCG 60:24–86 ff.

[211] Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 4.57.1 (SC 265:184): P: *Quidnam ergo esse poterit, quod mortuorum ualeat animabus prodesse?*

We have already observed that, like Eustratius at Constantinople, Gregory's response to those who, at Rome, questioned the saints' miracles relied heavily on drawing out the theological consequences of the Incarnation. But the latter played an equally important role in his demonstration of the power of the Mass to assist the souls of the deceased.[212] Certainly, Gregory repeated the traditional portrayal of the Mass as renewing Christ's redemptive death on the Cross, affirming that '[t]his sacrifice alone has the power of saving the soul from eternal death, for it presents to us mystically the death of the only-begotten Son. Though he is now 'risen from the dead and dies no more' (Rom 6.9) [. . .], he is again immolated for us in the mystery of the holy sacrifice'.[213] But Gregory also likened the Eucharist symbolically to the original joining of heaven and earth in Christ's body at birth. He argued:

> G: For, who of the faithful can have any doubt that at the very moment of the immolation, at the sound of the priest's voice, the heavens are opened and choirs of angels are present at the mystery of Jesus Christ (*illo Iesu Christi mysterio*), that the lowest is united with the most sublime, earth is joined to the heavens, the visible and the invisible become one?[214]

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[212] For the Eucharist in Gregory's thought, see Gramalgia (1991).

[213] Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 4.60.2 (SC 265:200–2): G: *Haec namque singulariter uictima ab aeterno interitu animam saluat, quae illam nobis mortem Vnigeniti per mysterium reparat, qui licet 'surgens a mortuis iam non moritur' [. . .], tamen in se ipso immortaliter atque incorruptibiliter uiuens, pro nobis iterum in hoc mysterio sacrae oblationis immolatur.*

[214] Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 4.60.3 (SC 265:202): *Quis enim fidelium habere dubium possit ipsa immolationis hora ad sacerdotis uocem caelos aperiri, in illo Iesu Christi mysterio angelorum choros adesse, summis ima sociari, terram caelestibus iungi, unum quid ex uisibilibus atque inuisilibus fieri?*

The cosmic setting recalled Gregory's depiction in the second dialogue of the saints as spirit-bearing bodies in the economy of spiritual flesh instituted by the Incarnation. To Gregory, the Eucharist, which re-actualized the descent of God into the world of the senses, was clearly part of the same economy as God's dwelling in the saints. Indeed, the reordering of flesh and spirit embodied in the sacraments appears to have been something for which the saints could stand as a metaphor in Gregory's mind.[215] Both derived ontologically from the exchange of properties between God and man brought about through the Incarnation. As Gregory affirmed in respect of Benedict's ability to absolve the dead through God's descent into matter, and its corresponding elevation, 'God having been made flesh for man's sake, God deigned to lavish this on flesh, that flesh should judge spirits'.[216] There could be no doubt that the Eucharist equally possessed this power of absolution, nor that it did so according to the same, essentially incarnational, religious aesthetic.

It has been argued that Eustratius's defence of the saints' miracles was aimed above all at justifying the church's ritual care for the dead, a sacramental monopoly that entrenched the church's material and social standing.[217] Reading the *Dialogues* in this light, it is easy to imagine that this was Gregory's purpose also. For Gregory, defending the saints and the sacraments appears to have amounted to the same thing. That was why it was legitimate to cast Benedict in the role of a quasi-priest. Certainly, Gregory was not suggesting (as the conclusion of the *Dialogues* made all too clear) getting rid of the church's sacramental order or the priesthood, but their defence. Neither was Gregory proposing a 'new', 'charismatic' era in the history of the church, or an ecclesiology that transcended the Incarnation to embrace the Spirit as some have asserted.[218] On the contrary, the *Dialogues*' vision of the saints actually served to uphold the authority of the institutional church.[219] For Gregory as much as Eustratius, the defence of the powers of the saints and the sacraments went hand in hand, and both were equally aware of the liturgical imperative of the saints' cult.[220] In his *Life of Eutychius*, Eustratius associated the holy man's dead body with the Eucharistic altar, remarking that Eutychius was buried at its base so that:

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[215] Naturally, Gregory was not unique in doing this among patristic writers. See Williams (1999).

[216] Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 2.23.6 (SC 260:208–10).

[217] Dagron (1992) 59 col. 2.

[218] See, for example, Cracco (1977) and (1981); also Cracco Ruggini (1985); and Cracco and Cracco Ruggini (1997).

[219] See also Straw (1988) 72–3. Note also that it has been argued that '[l]iturgical imagery framed and defined every gesture, stance and action' of the body of St Symeon the Younger, Gregory's contemporary: Ashbrook Harvey (1998) 537.

> even after his soul's release he should not be bodily separated from the holy altar. With his soul present at the heavenly altar with the holy angels and apostles, offering with them prayers on behalf of the people, it was necessary for the body – his soul's yoke-fellow, fellow-traveller and fellow-labourer in life – not to be separated from the spotless altar on earth, so that it might somehow supplicate [. . .] the Lord God like a priest for the sake of his own people and city. For the bodies of the saints are equal in power to their souls.[221]

Gregory performed a suggestively similar act that linked saint, sacrament, and priest, when he transformed the altar area at St Peter's shrine on the Vatican hill so that Mass could be celebrated directly over Peter's body.[222] From this perspective, Gregory's *Dialogues* should be understood as an integrated apology for the interpenetrating nature of the spiritual and material planes of the church's priestly vocation expressed through a defence of the saints as intercessors and the church's care for the dead.

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[220] For Eustratius, see Dagron (1992) 65 col. 1. This suggests the need to revise the so-called uniqueness of Gregory's sacramental theology: Gramalgia (1991) 264. Gramalgia contrasts Eustratius and Gregory ('se non altro perché nessuno dei testi biblici citati da Eustrazio nel contesto delle messe per i defunti è presente nei *Dialoghi* di Gregorio'), but overlooks the broader context between the two texts and the significant biblical authorities shared between them.

[221] Eustratius of Constantinople, *v. Eutych* = CCG 25:2703–14: *ἵνα καὶ μετὰ τὴν διάζευξιν μηδὲ σωματικῶς χωρισθῇ τοῦ ἁγίου θυσιαστηρίου. Τῆς γὰρ ψυχῆς αὐτοῦ τῷ ἐν οὐρανοῖς παρισταμένης θυσιαστηρίῳ κακεῖ μετὰ τῶν ἁγίων ἀγγέλων καὶ ἀποστόλων τὰς ὑπὲρ παντὸς τοῦ λαοῦ προσφερούσης δεήσεις, ἐχρῆν καὶ τὸ ὁμόζυγον καὶ τὸ ὁμοπόρευτον καὶ συναθλῆσαν αὐτῇ σῶμα κατὰ τὸν τῆδε βίον μηδὲ τοῦτο κεχωρίσθαι τοῦ ἐπὶ γῆς ἀχράντου θυσιαστηρίου, ἵνα καὶ αὐτὸ τρόπον τινὰ [. . .] κυρίῳ τῷ θεῷ συνικετεύῃ τῷ ἱερεῖ ὑπὲρ τοῦ ἑαυτοῦ λαοῦ καὶ τῆς πόλεως, ὅτι τῶν ἁγίων τὰ σώματα ἴσα δύνανται ταῖς ἁγίαις αὐτῶν ψυχαῖς.*

[222] *Liber Pontificalis*, L. Duchesne (ed.), vol. 1 (Paris, 1886), p. 312 = *The Book of the Pontiffs*, R. Davis (trans.) (Liverpool, 1989), p. 61. Note the reservations of Thacker (2007) 47–8.

CONCLUSION

According to the seventh-century historian, Theophylact Simocatta, in 593–4, while, at Rome, Gregory the Great was composing his *Dialogues on the Miracles of the Italian Fathers*, the otherwise exceptionally pious Emperor Maurice (Gregory's patron) came to doubt in the miracles which St Euphemia, a martyr from the age of Diocletian, purportedly performed at her shrine at Chalcedon.[223] Euphemia's shrine could be found a short trip across the Bosphorus from the imperial capital, where it stood on a low rise overlooking the strait and the imperial city. It was an impressive complex, composed of three separate structures: a long, colonnaded atrium led to an equally long and lavishly appointed basilica, which itself gave way, on its north-eastern side, to an enclosed rotunda, 'encircled on the interior with columns fashioned with great skill, alike in material and alike in magnitude'.[224] This rotunda housed the sarcophagus in which the martyr's body lay, while a raised gallery allowed pilgrims both to address their devotions to the saint and participate in the liturgical activities of the shrine.[225] The area enclosed within the martyrium was so large that it was chosen as the venue for the third session of the Council of Chalcedon in 451 and the contentious decisions of the Council were later inscribed on its walls.[226]

By the late sixth century, Euphemia's shrine was famous for the miraculous effusions of blood that poured from the martyr's tomb, and which the shrine's personnel ceremoniously collected and displayed for the veneration of the faithful.[227] Despite the emperor's being an otherwise enthusiastic patron of saints and their cult, Maurice apparently began to doubt in the authenticity of these miraculous profusions of blood by Euphemia.[228] According to Theophylact, Maurice 'belittled the miracles, rejected the wonder outright, and attributed the mystery to men's crafty devices'.[229] In order to test their claims, Maurice had the tomb sealed the day before the expected profusion on the martyr's feast day, 16 September. When the miracle successfully took place despite these precautions, the miraculous power of Euphemia's relics was vindicated and the emperor's disbelief dramatically admonished by the martyr herself. Theophylact reported:

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[223] See Theophylact Simocatta, *History*, C. de Boor (ed.) (Leipzig, 1887) 8.14.1–9 = Michael and Mary Whitby, *The History of Theophylact Simocatta* (Oxford, 1986), 233–4. On Maurice's piety, see Whitby and Whitby, *History*, xx.

[224] Evagrius Scholasticus, *Ecclesiastical History*, J. Bidez and L. Parmentier (eds.) (London, 1898), 2.3 = Michael Whitby, *Evagrius*, 63. Evagrius Scholasticus had resided in Constantinople as a student for several years during the 550s and returned again in 588 as legal counsel for Patriarch Gregory of Antioch (570–92). Whether Evagrius had actually been to Euphemia's shrine is debated. See Michael Whitby, *Evagrius*, xix–xx; and Allen (1981) 100.

[225] On the architecture of saints' shrine in this period, see Hahn (1997).

[226] See Schneider (1951).

[227] While Theophylact asserted that these miraculous effusions always occurred on Euphemia's feast day, Evagrius claimed that these effusions took place unexpectedly. On the eve of the miracle, Euphemia would appear in a vision to the patriarch or other leading religious figures at Constantinople and would 'order[. . .] them to attend on

> once again rivers of aromatic blood sprang from the tomb, the mystery gushed with the discharges, sponges were enriched with fragrant blood, and the martyr multiplied the effluence. For when God is disbelieved, he is not accustomed to begrudge knowledge. And so in this way the martyr educated the emperor's disbelief. But the emperor sent, in return for the gushing forth of blood, an inundation of tears, and repaid the effluences of aromatics with a shower from his eyes, saying: 'God is wonderful in his saints' (Ps 67.36).[230]

Like Eustratius's contemporary apology for the saints' miracles, moreover, it is important to emphasize just how far Theophylact underlined Euphemia's personal responsibility for overcoming Maurice's doubts about the authenticity of her alleged miracles: it was not so much God, but the saint herself, 'an indubitable witness to her own power through the miracles' (*τῆς ἑαυτῆς δυνάμεως διὰ τῶν θαυμάτων ἀπαράγραφος μάρτυς*), who corrected the emperor, as it

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her and harvest a vintage' at her shrine. See Evagrius, *History*, Bidez and Parmentier (eds.), 2.3 = Michael Whitby, *Evagrius*, 64.

[228] On Maurice's promotion of saints' cults, see Dal Santo (2011c) and the conclusion to this study.

[229] Whitby and Whitby, *History*, 233 = Theophylact Simocatta, *History*, de Boor (ed.), 8.14.6: *καὶ σμικρολογεῖται τὰ θαύματα, καὶ ἀποδοκιμάζεται παρ᾽ αὐτῷ τὸ παράδοξον, καὶ ῥᾳδιουργικαῖς ἐπινοίαις ἀνθρώπων ἀνατίθησι τὸ μυστήριον.*

[230] Whitby and Whitby, *History*, 233–4 = Theophylact Simocatta, *History*, de Boor (ed.), 8.14.8–9: *καὶ πάλιν μεμυρισμένων αἱμάτων ἀπὸ τοῦ μνήματος πηγάζουσι ποταμοί, καὶ βλύζει ταῖς ἐκπομπαῖς τὸ μυστήριον, καὶ πιαίνονται σπόγγοι εὐωδίας αἱμάτων, καὶ πολυπλασιάζει ἡ μάρτυς τὴν ἔκροιαν· οὐκ οἶδε γὰρ γνώσεως φθονῆσαι θεὸς ἀπιστούμενος. οὕτω μὲν οὖν ἡ μάρτυς ἐπαιδαγώγει τοῦ βασιλέως τὸ ἄπιστον· ὁ δ᾽ αὐτοκράτωρ ἀντέπεμπε ταῖς τῶν αἱμάτων ἐκβλύσεσι τὴν τῶν δακρύων ἐπίχυσιν, καὶ ταῖς ἐκροίαις τῶν μύρων ἀντεδίδου τῶν ὀμμάτων τὸν ὄμβρον, "θαυμαστὸς" φάσκων "ὁ θεὸς ἐν τοῖς ἁγίοις αὐτοῦ."*

were, from beyond the grave. Indeed, it is tempting to imagine that the test imposed on Euphemia's shrine was somehow connected to the debate visible in Eustratius's *On the State of Souls*—and, as we have argued here, Gregory the Great's *Dialogues*.[231] At the very least, Theophylact's story provides us with a further, striking example of the scepticism with which cult of the saints and reports of their miracles could be greeted in the capital during the decade in which Gregory was composing his account of their wonders in Italy. It seems short-sighted to imagine that such anxieties at Constantinople made no impact on those with a vested interest in upholding the authenticity of the saints' miracles, and the view of God's engagement with creation which they implied, whether at Rome or elsewhere in the empire. A later chapter in this study will highlight how far such critical resistance to their miracles was a latent feature of much writing about the saints from the end of the sixth and the beginning of the seventh centuries.

Understanding the *Dialogues* against a contemporary background in which the saints' cult was widely questioned serves fundamentally to realign our understanding of the nature of Gregory's text. When placed alongside Eustratius's *On the State of Souls* and other contemporary texts, the *Dialogues* appear designed to address doubts and grievances of a sophisticated kind, serving as a means for overcoming doubt and rebutting criticism among those who questioned the devotional practices of contemporary Christian orthodoxy. This, in turn, raises questions about the prevailing intellectual and cultural milieu in Rome, which appears closely linked to Constantinople.[232] In the late sixth century, Rome belonged culturally to the early Byzantine Mediterranean. The city was not yet the spiritual hub of the exclusively Latin civilization of medieval Europe that Gregory has often been credited with founding.[233] On the contrary, the *Dialogues* manifest a greater degree of religious dissent and cultural plurality in sixth-century Italy than has hitherto been supposed, one that demands integration into a broader Mediterranean narrative.[234] At the same time, the cultic implications of the sixth-century apology for the saints had far-reaching consequences for Christian anthropology, both theoretical and 'applied'. Medieval Christianity (Latin and Greek) would, of course, be profoundly impressed with the saints' activity *post mortem* and the importance of prayer for the dead.[235] This was arguably especially so in the west where the ability of the living to ameliorate the *post-mortem* condition of the dead was subsequently used to build, during the high middle ages, a systematic view of Purgatory.[236] Yet even during the sixth and seventh centuries those who joined in the debate about the saints and the nature of their activity beyond the grave readily perceived that this debate raised a complex web of related questions about the afterlife, not just for the saints, but all human beings generally.[237] If the souls of the saints were active *post mortem* and, following their separation from the body, entered directly into the divine presence in heaven, what was the corresponding fate that awaited the souls of those who were not saints? How far could the capacities of the body (for example, movement and sight) be attributed to the disembodied soul? To what categories of sinners did the assistance rendered by the prayers and oblations of the church extend? While, to modern audiences, questions such as these, regularly raised in the early Byzantine period, can often be interpreted as reflecting a merely morbid fascination or a vain attempt to impose an artificial human 'system' on the inscrutable face of death, the following chapter will attempt to demonstrate just how far they naturally flowed out of the contemporary debate about the cult of the saints.

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[231] See further Dal Santo (2011*c*); also Grégoire (1946) and Whitby (1988) 23.

[232] McCormick (1997). The intellectual history of the papacy during this period remains unclear: Noble (2004).

[233] See esp. Markus (1981) 33–6 and (1997) 95–6; *contra* Ullmann (1955) 36 and (1972) [2003] 52–9. To Brown, Gregory is a 'Byzantine Latin': (1999) 299. For a largely pessimistic view of Gregory's participation in the culture of the east, see Cavallo (2007). But compare the more positive views of Dagens (1981); Petersen (1984) 189–91; Cracco Ruggini (1986); and Straw (2004) 107 (Gregory's correspondents 'circle the Mediterranean as hours mark a clock').

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[234] For hostility towards monks in Constantinople during Justinian's reign, see Hatlie (2008) 29, 51, 170.

[235] See, for example, Vogel (1986) and Geary (1994). For ongoing debate in Byzantium, see Gouillard (1981).

[236] Dal Santo (2009*a*). See also the following chapter of this study.

[237] On changing representations of the afterlife in late antiquity, see Brown (1999*a*) 313; idem (2000*c*). I thank Prof. Brown for very kindly providing me with the latter article.

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2

The fourth dialogue of Pope Gregory the Great

The early Byzantine context of a Latin disquisition on the soul

INTRODUCTION: ESCHATOLOGY AND THE CULT OF SAINTS AT THE END OF ANTIQUITY

In May 599 Gregory the Great received a letter from a Gallic hermit seeking his guidance on the fate of children's souls *post mortem*.[1] Secundinus did not understand how children's souls were guilty if, dying too young, they had never actually consented to any sinful acts.[2] Gregory reiterated what he considered the universally accepted position: without baptism (the essential *quid pro quo* for salvation) all human souls were condemned—in Gregory's Augustinian terms, 'bound by the chains of original sin' (*omnis anima originalis peccati uinculis est obstricta*).[3] Nevertheless, Gregory recognized the theological and philosophical problems this ostensibly straightforward question raised. Did the soul of each man descend directly from Adam or was it given to each man singly? If the soul was born from Adam's substance at exactly the same time as the flesh (and did not precede it, as Plato and Origen taught), why did not the soul die with the flesh? If, on the other hand, the soul was not born at the same time as the body, why was it eternally condemned by the sins of a temporary flesh? Gregory cautioned the hermit that these problems had been 'not a little argued' among the holy fathers and were unlikely ever to be resolved. The soul belonged to a great mystery (*gravis quaestio*), impenetrable to man, and, in the end, Gregory simply referred the hermit to biblical passages with whose authority no-one could disagree.

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[1] We have Gregory's reply in *ep*. 9.148 (May, 599).

[2] Gregory the Great, *Ep*. 9.148, ll. 128–30: *Si corpus originali tenetur culpa, unde anima quae a Deo datur rea erit, quae adhuc in actuali delicto non consensit corpori?*

[3] Gregory the Great, *Ep*. 9.148, ll. 138–41.

This was not the first time in his career that Gregory had confronted these thorny issues, however. As we shall discover in this chapter, the fourth and final dialogue in Gregory's *Dialogues on the Miracles of the Italian Fathers* represents a sustained disquisition on the nature of the soul and its relationship to the body, particularly beyond the grave.[4] It will be argued here that far from inconsequential or merely catechetical, Gregory's discussion of the soul engaged both profoundly and extensively with debates about the afterlife being contemporaneously pursued across the East Roman world, and especially at Constantinople. Without giving due consideration to these debates, it would be impossible to arrive at a proper understanding of the nature of Gregory's text and its historical purpose.

The second chapter of this book aims, therefore, to re-investigate the sixth-century context that stood behind the discussion of the soul and the afterlife in Gregory's fourth dialogue and to insert this Latin debate into its early Byzantine setting. As Brian Daley has observed with his eye on Eustratius and Gregory's texts, '[b]oth Greeks and Latins were clearly preoccupied with the fate of the dead during the last decades of the sixth century'.[5] This chapter thus continues a comparative approach between Gregory's *Dialogues* and Eustratius of Constantinople's *On the State of Souls*, arguing that the controversy concerning the saints observed in the previous chapter precipitated an effort to systematize Christian eschatological belief that catalyzed the development of eschatological doctrine.[6] It will be argued here that the fourth dialogue is Gregory's attempt to account systematically for the eschatological ramifications of his defence of the cult of the saints and the four books of Gregory's *Dialogues* reveal a tightly organized, inherent unity.[7] A comparison between Gregory's fourth dialogue and Eustratius's *On the State of Souls* shows that Gregory and Eustratius, embarking from a similar hagiology, arrive at comparable eschatological paradigms.

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[4] Carozzi (1994) 53–4.

[5] Daley (2001) 79. Brown has similarly affirmed that Gregory 'shared with the Greek authors of his own age and of the seventh century a finely developed ascetic sensitivity that saw, in the moment of death itself, a "great mystery" to be contemplated with awestruck eyes': Brown (1999*a*) 299.

[6] On systematization as a general characteristic of Byzantine culture in this period, see Cameron (1992*a*).

This chapter argues that Gregory's text, like Eustratius's, was itself precipitated by a certain revival of interest, during the sixth century, in Aristotelianism, and above all Aristotle's distinctive view of the soul. It investigates the influence at Constantinople of a dissenting Aristotelian rationalism linked to the little-known Stephen Gobar.[8] While Gobar's impact on Eustratius has been suggested before, it will be argued here that the unorthodox views of the soul and the afterlife which Gregory rebutted at Rome (along with his interlocutor's unconcealed preference for rationalistic and empiricist arguments) indicate that Gregory, too, may have been engaging with a similar source of controversy. The study of the intellectual history of early medieval Rome is only in its infancy.[9] But through the careful contextualization of Gregory's text, Byzantine Italy and particularly Rome emerge as indisputably part of a broader Mediterranean world that was perhaps more diverse intellectually throughout the sixth and seventh centuries than sometimes credited.[10]

Like other examples of hagiographical literature from the later sixth century, Gregory's text can be appreciated as masking 'a surprisingly deep well of doubt, scepticism, uncertainty [. . .] in regard to the manifestation of divine power on earth' and 'a pronounced spirit of scepticism'.[11] The fourth dialogue is strikingly different in this respect from Gregory's letter to Secundinus. For the hermit, belief in the afterlife could be taken for granted. In the fourth dialogue, by contrast, Gregory must work hard simply to establish the existence of an afterlife for the human soul *at all*. Deacon Peter, Gregory's interlocutor, repeatedly calls the church's teaching into question and counters eschatological doctrine with sceptical and rationalistic propositions.[12] As we have seen, Gregory's fourth dialogue is usually viewed as a catechism on Christian eschatology intended for the ignorant audience that the *Dialogues* were traditionally thought designed to evangelize. We shall argue here, however, that the fourth dialogue reflects Gregory's continued effort to rebut arguments against the saints' cult, considered now in a more integrated theological context, a logical conclusion to Gregory's apology for the saints' miracles in the second dialogue. The fourth dialogue is thus not an anomaly, but an integral part of Gregory's project. Although Gregory will be seen to have touched upon many issues in his fourth dialogue,[13] the significance of many questions only comes into focus when they are recognized as ramifying from a larger polemic concerning the cult of saints, especially those regarding the precise nature of the soul's activities *post mortem*. Other questions, as we shall see, such as the eternity of hell, probably relate to the sixth-century Origenist controversy and other contemporary debates that surrounded the revival of Aristotelianism arguably reflected in the work of Stephen Gobar.[14]

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[7] *Contra* Pricoco and Simonetti (2005) xix–xx. Eschatology formed the backdrop to Gregory's thought generally: Dagens (1977) 345–73; Leyser (2000*a*) 184.

[8] For the vitality of philosophical study of Aristotle in the sixth century, see Wildberg (2005) 318–24.

[9] See Noble (2004).

[10] Compare Llewellyn (1971) 102–3; and Herrin (1987) 162–5.

[11] Hatlie (2008) 180 and 251.

[12] Van Uytfanghe (1986) 317. See also Cremascoli (1989).

DEACON PETER AND RATIONALIST–MATERIALIST PREJUDICES IN ROME: ESTABLISHING A HERMENEUTIC

The previous chapter of this study highlighted Eustratius of Constantinople's defence of the reality of the saints' miracles for reconsidering Gregory's hagiology in the second dialogue or *Life of Benedict*. As we have seen, some of Eustratius's opponents argued that God or angels assumed the saints' forms on the grounds that the disembodied human soul lay dormant until the Resurrection. But others of his adversaries appear to have held a more radically materialist position that denied the afterlife of the soul *tout court*: human souls, including their fate *post mortem*, were indistinguishable from those of other animals.[15] The saints' souls were inactive simply because there was no afterlife.

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[13] The different fate of human beings and animals *post mortem* (*Dial.* 4.3–4); the ascent of souls into heaven (*Dial.* 4.5); the fate of children *post mortem* (*Dial.* 4.18–19); whether the saints' souls enter heaven before the Last Judgement (*Dial.* 4.26); whether the souls of sinners enter hell before the Last Judgement (*Dial.* 4.28); whether the souls of the dead recognize each other in the next life (*Dial.* 4.34); why images of material things are used to represent heaven and hell (*Dial.* 4.36); how some people are said to have come back to life after dying (*Dial.* 4.37); whether souls are cleansed by fire in the next life (*Dial.* 4.41); the location of hell (*Dial.* 4.44); whether all are punished to the same degree (Dial. 4.45); the eternity of hell (*Dial.* 4.46); the saints' ability to pray for the dead in hell (*Dial.* 4.46); whether church burial or any other measure performed by the living can assist the dead (*Dial.* 4.52–6).

[14] On the ramifications of this controversy, see Meyendorff (1975) 47–68.

It is therefore remarkable that, at the end of the third dialogue, Deacon Peter should invite Gregory to desist from further saintly miracle stories for the simple reason that there were many in Rome who did not believe in the soul's *post-mortem* survival. Peter affirmed:

> P: Considering how many there are within the fold of the Church who doubt in the life of the soul after death (*de uita animae post mortem carnis [. . .] dubitare*), I beg you for proofs from reason (*quae ex ratione suppentunt*) and examples from the lives of the saints (*qua animarum exempla*), if any come to your mind, so that they should learn that the soul does not come to an end with the flesh (*cum carne animam non finiri*). This will be a source of edification for many.[16]

Peter implores Gregory 'to bear patiently with me if I [. . .] impersonate the weak and continue the enquiry in their name in order to help them more directly'.[17] Although Gregory's orthodoxy inevitably emerges as the victor in the text, Peter's questions appear urgent and logically consistent. That they reflect a social rather than merely textual reality is further indicated by the fact that they can be mapped onto debates being pursued at Constantinople and elsewhere.[18]

The scepticism Gregory rebutted had a number of salient features. The first was that arguments from Scripture, faith or Christian tradition were not of themselves sufficient. To persuade doubters of the Christian doctrine of the soul, Gregory must therefore have recourse to rational arguments. As Peter affirmed, summarizing the rationalistic attitude of the group he represented, 'one who does not believe in the unseen is an unbeliever pure and simple, and such a one does not look to faith in his doubts, but to reason' (*in eo quod dubitat, fidem non quaerit, sed rationem*).[19] Other features of the phenomenon Gregory addressed were its rationalistic tone and empiricist approach. 'Visible proof' (*ex rebus uisibilibus*) and 'clear objective evidence' (*apertis quibusdam rebus adtestantibus*) are required instead of doctrine.[20] The rationalistic and empiricist quality of Peter's objections is rooted in an often reiterated distinction between the seen, which is believable, and unseen, which is not: *mens refugit credere, quod corporeis oculis non ualet uidere.*[21]

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[15] Constas (2002) n. 14.

[16] Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 3.38.5 (SC 260:432): *Quam multos intra sanctae ecclesiae gremium constitutos de uita animae post mortem carnis perpendo dubitare. Quaeso ut debeas, uel quae ex ratione suppetunt, uel si qua animarum exempla animo occurrunt, pro multorum aedificatione dicere, ut hii qui suspicantur discant cum carne animam non finiri.*

[17] Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 4.4.9 (SC 265:32): *quaeso te ut me aequanimiter feras, si ipsi quoque apud te more Ecclesiastis nostri infirmantium in me personam suscepero, ut eisdem infirmantibus prodesse propinquius quasi per eorum inquisitionem possim.*

[18] See also Cooper and Dal Santo (2008).

Gregory's perception of the gravity of this rationalist–empiricist denial of the soul's survival *post mortem* can be measured from the major recapitulation of the Christian account of human existence that forms his response, one that appeals directly to what we might call a 'rationalist–empiricist hermeneutic'. Through the Fall, Gregory states, Adam forgot knowledge of God, the nature of Paradise and 'the joys of heaven which had been the object of his contemplation before'.[22] Whereas in Paradise Adam was familiar with God and the angels, the Fall extinguished the inner light that previously revealed spiritual things to Adam's mind.[23] Consequently, Adam's descendents were benighted by the flesh to the invisible world of the spirit, including the soul's survival and the saints' activity *post mortem*. 'Born as we are of his flesh into the darkness of this exile, we hear, of course, that there is a heavenly country, that angels are its citizens, *and that the spirits of the just live in company with them*; but being carnal men without experiential knowledge of the invisible, we wonder about the existence of anything we cannot see with the bodily eyes.'[24] In Gregory's paradigm, the flesh exerts a limiting control upon all human intellect so that, congruent to his fleshly state, man can only perceive and comprehend matter.[25] Thus, to Gregory, eyes which can only apprehend matter cannot be relied upon to verify the existence of spirit. Without the special intervention of God, this limit imposed upon the flesh would have remained insuperable, and every report concerning the existence of an unseen spiritual world the subject of insoluble doubt. Contrasting Adam's direct experience of God with his audience's scepticism, Gregory affirms that, even after the Fall, Adam could not have failed to believe as they did, owing to his empirical experience of Paradise.[26] As Gregory portrays it, therefore, sixth-century scepticism is not a historical phenomenon, but a consequence of the Fall, a universal feature of the human condition mitigated for Adam through his memory of a pre-Fall vision of God. As we shall see, however, the Roman scepticism Gregory addressed can be likened to philosophically inspired challenges to church dogma in Constantinople.

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[19] Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 4.1.6 (SC 265:22): *qui esse inuisibilis non credit, profecto infidelis est. Qui uero infidelis est, in eo quod dubitat, fidem non quaerit, sed rationem.*

[20] For example, Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 4.5.9 (SC 265:38): *uitam animae post corpus, apertis quibusdam rebus adtestantibus, agnoscere cupio*; *Dial.* 4.6.3 (SC 265:40): *ex rebus uisibilibus cogimur credere quod non uidemus.*

[21] For example, Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 4.5.5 (SC 265:36). Note also Carozzi (1994) 45: 'Cette connaissance de l'âme par les signes sert de fil conducteur à tout le quatrième livre'.

[22] Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 4.1.1 (SC 265:18): *illa caelestis patriae gaudia, quae prius contemplabatur.*

[23] Dagens (1977) 168.

[24] Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 4.1.2 (SC 265:18): *Ex cuius uidelicet carne nos in huius exilii caecitate nati, audimus quidem esse caelestem patriam, audimus quidem eius ciues angelos Dei, audimus eorundem angelorum socios spiritus iustorum perfectorum,*

The principal criteria for human knowledge as they emerge from Deacon Peter's critique of the Christian doctrine of the afterlife are that the mind understands everything on the basis of what the eyes see (or is perceived by the other senses) and interprets these things in the light of experience. In this sense, the human mind is able only to comprehend things that are (a) material, i.e. perceptible to the human senses (especially the eyes), and (b) empirical, i.e. attested by

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sed carnales quique, quia illa inuisibilia scire non ualent per experimentum, dubitant utrumne sit quod corporalibus oculis non uident.

[25] This is often presented as the contrast between inward (spiritual) and outward (fleshly) modes of knowledge. Interiority and exteriority are underlying contrasts that structure Gregory's thought: Dagens (1977) 168–203.

[26] Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 4.1.2 (SC 165:18): *Quae nimirum dubietas primo parenti nostro esse non potuit, quia et exclusus a paradisi gaudio, hoc quod amiserat, quoniam uiderat, recolebat. Hi autem sentire uel recolere audita non possunt, quia eorum nullum, sicut ille, saltem de praeterito experimentum tenent.* Cf. Gregory's statement in *Mor.* 2.9.50 which seems to leave some room for the soul's (ultimately fruitless) 'memory' of its former spiritual home: 'man, when he became an outcast from the joys of paradise, lost the power of contemplation [. . .]; and when he lifts himself up to seek anew the things above, he is sweetened indeed by the perfume of memory, but yields no weight of life in equal proportion' = in C. Marriott (trans.), *Morals on the Book of Job*, vol. 1 (Oxford, 1844), p. 531 = CCL 143: 491–2: *Et humanum genus a paradisi gaudiis expulsum, uim contemplationis perdidit [. . .]; cumque ad superna repetenda se erigit, fragat quidem odore memoriae, sed digne non exerit pondus uitae.*

experience. Consequently, only knowledge based upon these two criteria can be considered (c) rational—with rationality itself constituting the third criterion for authentic knowledge. By agreeing to pursue the dialogue on the basis of this paradigm, Gregory seems to make an appeal to his audience's rationalist position and its 'materialist–empiricist' prejudice.

To demonstrate the limitations of this position, however, Gregory borrows, remarkably, from Plato's *Republic* an analogy likening human existence to a darkened cave.[27] Into this cave is cast a pregnant woman who ultimately gives birth to a child that represents the human race. Born in darkness, the child possesses no personal experience of the world of light outside upon which to base any understanding of the external reality described by its mother, whose role in the allegory can be compared to that of the Old Testament prophets. To Gregory, man's condition in sinful flesh is the same, only in reverse; able to apprehend the visible features of the physical world by the light of the material sun, man is denied all knowledge of the invisible spiritual world. This is why even God's existence remains for human beings an impenetrable darkness, and why materialist–empiricist scepticism towards the afterlife of the soul and other aspects of Christian doctrine seems plausible and persuasive.

This rationale then guides Gregory's portrayal of the Incarnation as God's chosen means for overcoming the limitations imposed upon human cognition by the Fall.[28] For Gregory, the Incarnation represents God's deliberate provision for man of a visible and empirically attested experience, in matter, of God's unseen spiritual self. Having once appeared in matter in Christ, inward human experience of God, if not actual outward vision, is perpetuated by the Holy Spirit.[29]

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[27] See *Dial.* 4.1.3 (SC 265:20). This was possibly through the mediation of St Gregory of Nyssa († after 385) whose use of this image in his *De Mortuis* is the only known Christian usage before St Symeon the New Theologian (*c.* 1025–92) in volume one of his *Book of Ethics*: de Vogüé SC 265:20; and idem (1977). Gregory certainly knew Gregory of Nyssa's commentary on the Song of Songs: Meyvaert (1995) 100. This allusion to Greek was not noticed by Riché (1962) 193–4.

[28] According to Dagens, Gregory understands the Fall as being from 'inward' to 'outward' forms of understanding; the Incarnation reversed this process: Dagens (1977) 222–3.

[29] Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 4.1.4 (SC 265:20): *Vnde factum est, ut ipse inuisibilium et uisibilium creator ad humani generis redemptionem Vnigenitus Patris ueniret, et sanctum Spiritum ad corda nostra mitteret, quatenus per eum uiuificati crederemus, quae adhuc scire experimento non possumus.*

Gregory thus understands the Incarnation as supplying everything necessary for authentic human knowledge of God: a bipartite epistemology for believing in 'the existence of invisible beings' (*uita inuisibilium*) based either on one's experience of God through personal faith, or the experience of others expressed in Scripture and tradition through the Holy Spirit.[30] Both modes of understanding are justified by the prior fact that God has made himself the subject of man's flesh- and experience-limited intellect in the Incarnation. Faith is rational precisely because it is not 'blind', but in a God made visible in Christ, who continues to reveal himself through the human experience of the operations of the Holy Spirit. Similarly, the authority of Scripture and tradition can be trusted because it flows from a real, divine–human, spiritual–material event continuing in the personal experience of contemporary elders, or saints, who are, thanks to the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, new material, human mediators of the knowledge of God physically embodied in Incarnation. The role of these 'elders' seems comparable, in Gregory's thought, to the saints of the second dialogue who as 'God's temples' (*templa Dei*) re-actualized the Incarnation in their own bodies. By pointing to the experience of these elders, or saints, Gregory reminds his audience of the importance of the saints' miracles—a source of evidence for the afterlife (*animarum exempla*) flagged in the transition to this dialogue that Gregory will soon employ directly.[31]

THE SOUL—INSEPARABLE AND ACTIVE *POST MORTEM*?

But to Deacon Peter, however, this was not enough. The Incarnation might prove God's existence, but the deceased soul's very disembodiment surely deprived the church of any material evidence for its continued activity. There was no evidence for believing that there was any difference between the *post-mortem* fate of human beings and that of other animals, in the afterlife of whose souls the church does not believe. Do not both men and beasts return to dust, Peter asked, pointing to a passage from Ecclesiastes? Peter affirmed:

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[30] Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 4.1.4–5 (SC 265:20–2): *Quotquot ergo hunc Spiritum, hereditatis nostrae pignus, accepimus, de uita inuisibilium non dubitamus. Quisquis autem in hac credulitate adhuc solidus non est, debet procul dubio maiorum dictis fidem praebere, eisque iam per Spiritum sanctum inuisibilium experimentum habentibus credere.*

[31] Dagens (1977) 195–8.

> P: All that you say delights the minds of those who have faith. But, in making your clear-cut distinction between the spirit of man and animals, how do you explain the words of Solomon, '[. . .] the lot of man and of beast is one lot'. And continuing with the same thought he says, 'The one dies as well as the other. Both have the same life-breath, and man has no advantage over the beast'. [. . .] 'But all is vanity. Both go to the same place; both were made from the dust, and to the dust they return'.[32]

In response, Gregory explained the inconsistency through a laboured and slightly strained exegesis: Solomon was not expressing what he really thought to be true, but was imitating the beliefs of the 'weak', giving voice to error for the sake of its rebuttal. (Of course, this is precisely how Gregory must have understood his own task in the fourth dialogue.) But, thus expressed, the proposed affinity between human and animal perishability was a classically materialist position, one that suggests that the reference to Ecclesiastes was partly disingenuous—an effort to juxtapose the less optimistic views of the afterlife found in the Hebrew Bible with the much stronger statements concerning heaven and hell in the writings of the Christian New Testament, and to discredit thereby the whole edifice of catholic eschatological doctrine by exposing its incoherence. Significantly, this method of contrasting ostensibly conflicting biblical and patristic authorities was actually employed, by Stephen Gobar, at Constantinople during this period and may have provoked Eustratius's treatise.[33] (We shall return to this below.)

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[32] Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 4.3.3 (SC 265:24–6): *Rationi fidelium placent cuncta quae dicis. Sed quaeso te, dum spiritus hominum atque iumentorum tanta distinctione discernas, quid est quod Salomen ait: '[. . .] unus interitus est hominis et iumentorum, et aequa utriusque condicio [. . .]. Qui adhuc eandem sententiam suam subtiliter exsequens, adiungit, 'Sicut moritur homo, sic et illa moriuntur. Similiter spirant omnia, et nihil habet homo iumentis amplius'. [. . .] 'Cuncta subiacent uanitati, et omnia pergunt ad unum locum. De terra facta sunt, et in terra pariter reuertuntur'.* See Eccl. 3.18–20.

[33] Constas (2002) 280–1. Stephen Gobar's attempt to sow doubt by setting contradictory statements from the Fathers alongside each other is the subject of a later section of this study. On Gobar, see further below. On the other hand, Old Testament eschatology retained powerful contemporary authority in the sixth-century Church of

In their rationalism, materialism, and empiricism, Roman objections to ongoing human psychological activity *post mortem* echoed Eustratius's opponents. As in Rome, the Constantinopolitan rationalists contested the church's view of death and made much of a comparison of human beings to animals and the apparently contradictory Old Testament evidence.[34] The Mosaic Law, they argued, forbade the consumption of blood, 'for the life of a creature is in the blood' (Lev. 17.11; Deut. 12.23), which would seem to suggest biblical support for the materialist doctrine of a biological soul, whereby a creature's soul merely constituted its 'life force'.[35] According to this view, as a dying creature's blood drained away into dust, its soul or life force simply ceased to exist. To Eustratius, this effectively equated the *post-mortem* condition of humans and animals, which he censured as a misreading of Scripture: 'To these we reply that very often the Law of Moses defines the soul of every living creature as being the blood, and it was not unreasonable to call the rational and spiritual soul "blood", on account of their names' being the same. But he was addressing the imperfect and those who were still as children. We, however, know that of itself the blood neither cries nor speaks (cf. Gen 4.10), for it is of the body, and so the earth.'[36] The notion that the soul of non-human animals resided in their blood (without actually being the blood itself) was Stoic and had been earlier reconciled in late antiquity to Christian doctrine by authors like Basil the Great.[37] What Eustratius rejected was the attribution of such a biological soul to human beings, which clearly jeopardized the Christian belief in the soul's existence *post mortem*. Recalling Gregory's argument in the fourth dialogue against Peter's mistaken

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the east, where the difficulties it posed for important aspects of Christian doctrine and practice were carefully noted. See the final chapter of this book.

[34] *Contra* Dennis (2001) 1: 'The Byzantines were certain that death was not the end; the sources give almost no indication of disbelief in the afterlife'; and Beck (1979) 6: 'Nur vereinzelt hätten „Dissenters" daran zu mäkeln gehabt.'

[35] A biological soul is how Aristotle's psychology is sometimes interpreted today, although Aristotle did not equate the soul with the blood. See Tancred-Lawson (1986) 58 ff.

[36] Eustratius of Constantinople, *Stat. anim.* = CCG 60:158–64: *πρὸς ὁὺς ἐροῦμεν ὅτι ὁ Μωσέως νόμος πολλαχῶς παντὸς ἀλόγου ζώου τὸ αἷμα ψυχὴν εἶναι διοριζόμενος, καὶ οὐκ ἀπεικὸς ἦν διὰ τὴν ὁμωνυμίαν καλέσαι καὶ τὴν λογικὴν καὶ νοερὰν ψυχήν, αἷμα· πρὸς γὰρ ἀτελεῖς ἔτι καὶ νηπίους διελέγετο. Οἴδαμεν δὲ ὅτι τὸ αἷμα αὐτὸ καθ' ἑαυτὸ οὔτε βοᾷ, οὔτε λαλεῖ· σῶμα γὰρ ἐστι καὶ γῆ.*

[37] See Eustratius of Constantinople, *Stat. anim.* = CCG 60:164–74.

invocation of the passage from Ecclesiastes to support the same view, Eustratius asserted that '[t]he difference between the souls of beasts and men consists in that, as the father [Basil] says, the former is corruptible and dissolves back into the earth out of which it was joined together, while the human [soul] remains after the dissolution of the body, calls out, and is active [. . .].'[38]

Returning to Gregory's fourth dialogue, Deacon Peter further objected that he could not be sure of the afterlife of the soul since, though he was present at a man's death, still he did not observe the man's soul leaving the body. 'I once witnessed the death of a monk', he said, 'at one moment I could see him speaking to me and the next moment I saw him dead. But I did not see whether or not his soul departed. And I find it difficult to accept on faith what I cannot see'.[39] Again this was a strikingly materialist objection whose thrust inevitably undermined the Christian doctrine of the afterlife, including the cult of the saints.[40] While Gregory believed that the soul was 'invisible by nature and remains invisible whether it is in the body or departing from it',[41] the doubters asserted that the grounds for believing in the bodily life of the soul were in fact plenty. The activity of the living body proved the existence of the soul *before* death, but there was no such evidence, however, that the soul remained active once the body it formerly animated was dead. As Deacon Peter asked, 'in what movements or what activities can I recognize the life of the soul after death? From what tangible signs can I learn of the existence of the invisible?'[42] Nicholas Constas has argued that, at Constantinople at the end of the sixth century, rationalist criticism of the claims of the saints' posthumous miracles made by hagiographers was strengthened by developments in medical knowledge and particularly empirical observation of the dying. The cumulative effect of these observations was to the benefit of a 'materialist turn' that 'made nonsense of [the church's] institutional dalliance with the dead.'[43] Yet this is precisely the context for Deacon Peter's doubts in the fourth dialogue.

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[38] Eustratius of Constantinople, *Stat. anim.* = CCG 60:174–8: *Ἡ διαφορὰ οὖν ψυχῆς κτήνους καὶ ψυχῆς ἀνθρώπου ἐν τούτῳ δείκνυται, ὥς εἶπεν ὁ πατήρ, ἐν τῷ τὴν μὲν φθείρεσθαι καὶ εἰς γῆν ἀναλύεσθαι, ὅθεν καὶ συνέστη, τὴν δὲ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου, καὶ μετὰ τὴν διάλυσιν τοῦ σώματος ἐπιδιαμένειν καὶ βοᾶν και ἐνεργεῖν* [. . .].

[39] Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 4.5.1 (SC 265:32): *Quodam fratre moriente, praesentem fuisse me contigit. Qui repente, dum loqueretur, uitalem emisit flatum, et quem prius mecum loquentem uidebam, subito extinctum uidi. Sed eius anima utrum egressa sit an non egressa sit non uidi, et ualde durum uidetur, ut credatur res esse, quam nullus ualeat uidere.*

[40] Peter emphasizes sight—and hence empiricism—as a criterion for belief through the repetition of the verb *uideo*. This is best seen in the Latin: *uidebam, uidi, uidi, uidere*. The *uidetur* ('seems') I do not technically count, but Gregory's choice of this word confirms the semantic field of the passage.

[41] Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 4.5.2 (SC 265:34): *Natura quippe animam inuisibilis est, atque ita ex corpore inuisibiliter egreditur, sicut in corpore inuisibiliter manet.*

[42] Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 4.5.3 (SC 265:34): *sed uitam animae in corpore manentis pensare possum ex ipsis motibus corporis, quia, nisi corpori anima adesset,*

Gregory countered the Roman scepticism represented by Peter's arguments by drawing an analogy between the soul's invisible presence in the body and God's in creation. He contended that just as in a living person the invisible soul's existence was inferred from the living body's activities, so the invisible God's existence was implied through the activities of his creatures.[44] Ultimately, both God and the soul are invisible spiritual bodies which become visible through the effects which they exert upon visible physical objects perceptible to the human senses. For this reason, Gregory argued, human beings who rely epistemologically upon material causes reasonably believe in the existence of invisible things—or rather they have no reason not to. To Gregory, the sceptics actually confused the natural order of knowledge, since 'no visible objects are seen except through invisible powers'. Indeed, the eye's ability to see derived from God's first having granted it sight; matter does not of its own see. Gregory affirmed:

> G: Everything the eye of your body looks upon is corporeal, yet that very physical eye would not see anything unless something incorporeal gave it those keen powers of vision. Take away the unseen mind, and the eye that used to see stares emptily into space. Take the soul from the body; let the eyes remain wide open. Now, if the eyes were able to see by their own power, why is it that they see nothing when the soul withdraws?

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eiusdem membra corporis moueri non possent; uitam uero animae post carnem in quibus motibus quibusque operibus uideo, ut ex rebus uisis esse collegam, quod uidere non possum?

[43] Constas (2002) 279. See also Haldon (1997*a*) 43–4, who describes Eustratius as engaged in confronting a 'rationalist' tradition that was prepared to assert the superiority of Hippocratic medicine over against the 'therapy of miracles' on offer at saints' shrines.

[44] *Dial.* 4.5.4 (SC 265:34).

> The obvious conclusion is that visible things are seen only because of an invisible power.[45]

For Gregory, the mind relied upon the body for perception of the physical world through the cooperation of an invisible soul, imperceptible to the senses but proved by reason. It was a neat reversal of his opponents' rationalist–materialist hermeneutic.

The connection between Eustratius's apology in favour of the activity of the soul *post mortem* and Gregory's defence of the same doctrine can also be appreciated when Gregory appeals to the saints' posthumous miracles as evidence for the soul's survival beyond the grave. While rationalist materialism imperilled Christian eschatology generally, Eustratius argued with a particular eye to the saints' activity *post mortem*, distinguishing human from animal psychology in order to shore up the saints' intercession for the living and the reality of their visions and miracles at their shrines. 'As has been demonstrated,' he continued, 'the rational and spiritual soul remains even after its separation from the body after death and correspondingly lives and speaks and is active in a like manner, not in imagination, but authentically (*οὐ φαντασιωδῶς, ἀλλ᾽ ἀληθῶς*). [. . .] having free speech before God, the soul is sent back into this life for the benefit of many whenever he commands.'[46] Indeed, the notion that the saints' miracles occurred *φαντασιωδῶς* or as a *φαντασία* was actively rebutted in the *Miracles of Cosmas and Damian*, also from Constantinople.[47]

The cult of the saints was as central to the argument at Rome as it was at Constantinople. The two lines of Gregory's counterattack complemented each other, since, as Gregory concluded, an invisible God could reasonably be expected to have equally invisible servants. 'And who are these invisible servants', the pope asked, 'if not the holy angels and souls of the just? (*nisi sanctos angelos et spiritus iustorum?*)'[48] To demonstrate once and for all the soul's continued existence after its separation from the body (*uitam animae post corpus*),[49] Gregory turned to the miracles performed by the saints at their shrines, which, in Gregory's view, constituted undeniable proof of the soul's ongoing activity *post mortem*. At the saints' shrines sceptics of the afterlife could daily find visible witnesses to the saints' invisible but nevertheless active souls. Gregory affirmed:

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[45] Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 4.5.6 (SC 265:36): *Ecce enim cuncta corporea oculus tui corporis aspicit, nec tamen ipse corporeus oculus aliquid corporeum uideret, nisi hunc res incorporea ad uidendum acueret. Nam tolle mentem quae non uidetur, et incassum patet oculus qui uidebat. Subtrahe animam corpori: remanent procul dubio oculi in corpore aperti; si igitur per se uidebant, cur, discedente anima, nihil uident? Hinc ergo collige, quia ipsa quoque uisibilia nonnisi per inuisibilia uidentur.*

[46] Eustratius of Constantinople, *Stat. anim.* = CCG 60:224–30: *ἡ μέντοι λογικὴ ψυχὴ καὶ νοερά, καὶ μετὰ τὴν τοῦ σώματος ἀναχώρησιν ὡς ἀποδέδεικται, καὶ διαμένει καὶ ζῇ καὶ λαλεῖ καταλλήλως καὶ ἐνεργεῖ ὡσαύτως, οὐ φαντασιωδῶς, ἀλλ᾽ ἀληθῶς·* [. . .] *πρὸς θεὸν ἔχουσα παρρησίαν, αὐτοῦ προστάσσοντος, ἀποστέλλεται καὶ εἰς τόνδε τὸν βίον δι᾽ ἑτέρων πολλῶν εὐεργεσίαν.*

[47] This text is discussed at length in the following chapter.

> G: You acknowledge that the life of the soul in the body is recognized from the physical movements of the body. Now consider those who laid down their lives willingly because of their faith in a life hereafter, and see how renowned they have become through their miracles. The sick approach the lifeless remains of these martyrs and are healed; perjurers come and find themselves tormented by Satan; the possessed come and are delivered from the power of the Devil; lepers approach and are cleansed; the dead are brought and are restored to life. Consider what a fullness of life they must enjoy where they now live, if even their dead bodies here on earth are alive with such abundant miracles (*in tot miraculis uiuunt*).[50]

In a debate where the contested activity of the soul *post mortem* was widely recognized as bearing adversely about the plausibility of the saints' miracles, we may question the wisdom of Gregory's employment of those same 'abundant miracles' as evidence for the afterlife of the soul. But for Gregory, those miracles—the cleansing of the possessed, the healing of the sick, the resurrection of the dead—appear to have held the quality of uncontestable objective fact. He implored his doubting audience at Rome: 'if you accept the presence in the soul of the body because of the body's physical activities, why do you not also recognize the continued life of the soul after death from the miracles performed through its lifeless body (*uitam animae post corpus etiam per ossa mortua in uirtute miraculorum*)?'[51]

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[48] Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 4.5.4 (SC 265:34): G: *Debent quippe ea quae ministrant ad eius similitudinem tendere, cui ministrant, ut quae inuisibili seruiunt, esse inuisibilia non dubitentur. Haec autem quae esse credimus nisi sanctos angelos et spiritus iustorum?*

[49] *Dial.* 4.5.9 (SC 265:38).

[50] *Dial.* 4.6.1(b)–2(a) (SC 265:40): *Tu uero ipse inquies quia uita animae in corpore manentis ex motibus corporis agnoscis. Et ecce hii qui animas in morte posuerunt atque animarum uitam post mortem carnis esse crediderunt, cotidianis miraculis coruscant. Ad extincta namque eorum corpora uiuentes aegri ueniunt et sanantur, periuri ueniunt et liberantur, leprosi ueniunt et mundantur, deferuntur mortui et suscitantur. Pensa itaque eorum animae qualiter uiuunt illic ubi uiuunt, quorum hic et mortua corpora in tot miraculis uiuunt.*

Thus, Gregory's refutation of Roman materialism naturally led him back to the saints and their activity *post mortem*. At both Rome and Constantinople during the last quarter of the sixth century, in other words, similar psychological and eschatological debates flowed both directly from and into a controversy surrounding the cult of the saints.

THE SOUL'S ACTIVITY *POST MORTEM*—EVIDENCE FROM THE LIVES OF THE SAINTS?

Interpreting Gregory the Great's fourth dialogue as an attempt to rebut the rationalist scepticism that was directed against the saints' cult at Rome during the early 590s offers a compelling context within which to read Peter's questions, often taxed as naïve and inconsequential, or worse.[52] Peter's rejection of the soul's existence *post mortem* owing to his failure to see the departing soul of a dying monk stood in flagrant and polemical opposition to the conventions of contemporary hagiographical literature to an extent that threatened to undermine the saints' cult generally. As an argument against the soul's activity *post mortem* and the miracles of the saints, it was certainly not casually chosen. In the previous chapter we observed the important role which hagiographical accounts of visions of souls ascending into heaven played in Eustratius's defence of the saints' activity *post mortem*. Such accounts enjoyed particular authority when the vision in question was reported by acknowledged patristic authorities such as Athanasius's *Life of Antony* or Jerome's *Life of Paul of Thebes*. It was also argued that Gregory made similar use of the reported visions of Benedict's soul and that of Germanus of Capua entering heaven. Together, Eustratius and Gregory asserted a reciprocal logic between the ability to see the saints' souls ascending into heaven and souls' ability to return to earth in pursuit of their *post-mortem* activities. As Eustratius argued, '[i]f a soul can be seen without its body progressing into heaven, it can also be conveyed back to our regions when necessity demands.'[53]

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[51] *Dial.* 4.6.2 (SC 265:40): *Si igitur uitam animae manentis in corpore deprehendis ex motu membrorum, cur non perpendis uitam animae post corpus etiam per ossa mortua in uirtute miraculorum?* Other early Byzantine writers composed collections of the saints' miracles with the same eschatological polemic in mind: see Chapter Four of this book.

[52] Cf. Clark (2003) 96–7: 'The eschatological beliefs presupposed in the stories told in Book IV [. . .] are particularly bizarre and often theologically aberrant'. Again, it is clear that the problem with Clark's whole thesis is his almost total incomprehension of the text's contemporary context.

Given the polemical weight attributed to such reports at this time, it should not be surprising to find that the modality of visions of ascending souls was also contested in Gregory's *Dialogues*. Immediately following his apparent victory in adducing the saints' miracles as evidence for the soul's activity *post mortem*, Gregory conceded that visions of souls ascending from and descending back to earth were not in fact universally visible. Addressing Deacon Peter, he stated:

> G: A little while ago you complained that you did not see the soul of a certain person as it departed from the body. It was a mistake on your part even to try to see an invisible being with your bodily eyes. For it was with spiritual vision, purified by acts of faith and abundant prayers, that many of our people were able repeatedly to observe souls leaving the body. I see a real need, therefore, of telling you how souls were observed at their departure from this world, and, also, how much the souls themselves could see on leaving the body.[54]

According to Gregory here, an individual's ability to apprehend a soul's ascent to heaven required a special form of 'spiritual' sight, the fruit of special ascetic achievement. Gregory thus admitted that visions of ascending souls were not visible in the usual sense of that word, at least not to everybody. This can be read as a significant concession to the sceptical position, which thus suggests its contemporary strength. Gregory followed this up with five stories where a vision of a soul ascending to heaven had been reported in contemporary Rome. Each has reliable supporting witnesses apparently known to his audience.[55] They should be interpreted as designed to reaffirm both the authenticity of such visions and the human soul's concomitant activity *post mortem*. Intended, in Gregory's words, to persuade 'where reason alone evidently could not suffice', their role as *exempla* in the polemic cannot be ignored.[56]

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[53] Eustratius of Constantinople, *Stat. anim.* = CCG 60:970–3: *Εἰ δυνατόν ἐστιν ψυχὴν ἀσώματον εἰς οὐρανοὺς ἀνερχομένην θεωρεῖν ὦ οὗτοι, δυνατὸν ποῦ πάντως καὶ πάλιν, εἰ χρεία καλέσοι, ταύτην ἐνταῦθα παραγενέσθαι.*

[54] Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 4.7.1 (SC 265 :40–2): *Paulo superius questus es morientis cuiusdam egredientem te animam non uidisse. Sed hoc ipsum iam culpae fuit, quod corporeis oculis rem uidere inuisibilem quaesisti. Nam multi nostrorum, mentis oculum fide pura et uberi oratione mundantes, egredientes e carne animas frequenter uiderunt. Vnde mihi nunc necesse est uel qualiter egredientes animae uisae sint, uel quanta ipsae, dum egrederentur, uiderint enarrare quatenus fluctuante animo [. . .].*

First, Gregory reiterated the story from the second dialogue, or *Life of Benedict*, involving Benedict's vision of angels carrying Germanus of Capua's soul into heaven, which seems to confirm the interpretation of that episode already offered above.[57] There follows a story concerning two aristocratic brothers, Speciosus and Gregorius, whom Gregory presents, perhaps significantly, as 'scholars' (*extoribus studiis eruditi*).[58] When one brother died at a distant monastery, Gregory tells us that his brother had a vision of his soul ascending to heaven; when the news of his brother's death finally arrived, it was realized that this had occurred at the exact moment of the vision.[59] Gregory's third story recounts the vision of 'a very devout religious', whom Gregory had known at his own monastery. Sailing from Sicily to Rome, this person had seen 'the soul of one of God's recluses of Samnium making its way to heaven'.[60] On landing, the religious 'made enquiries and found out that the servant of God had died the very day they saw his soul going to heaven'.[61] Again, simultaneity of vision and the subject's death was also supposed to prove the vision's authenticity. Recalling Deacon Peter's earlier objection, Gregory's fourth narrative relates the scene that greeted the attendants at the deathbed of a Roman monk named Spes.[62] The brothers gathered at Spes's bedside watched on as his soul rose to heaven in the shape of a dove. Finally, Gregory describes the death of a priest who had a vision of Sts Peter and Paul, whom he addressed as if they were actually presences in the flesh: 'It is good that you come, my lords! It is good!'[63] Gregory commented that, although the priest alone could see the saints' souls, the vision was no less authentic: 'Since he kept repeating these words, his friends standing at his side tried to find out to whom he was speaking. Surprised at their question, the sick man answered, "Do you not see the holy apostles present here? Do you not see the princes of the apostles, Peter and Paul?"'[64] Since the priest died shortly afterwards, Gregory noted: 'By following the Apostles [to heaven] he bore witness that he saw them'.[65] In other words, Gregory never strays from the polemical objective the stories were intended to serve.

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[55] See the discussion in McCready (1989) 119–25.

[56] Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 4.7.1 (SC 265:42): *quod plene ratio non ualet, exempla suadeant.*

[57] *Dial.* 4.8.1 (SC 265:42). The same episode is reported at *Dial.* 2.35.2–5. See the previous chapter.

[58] *Dial.* 4.9.1 (SC 265:42).

[59] *Dial.* 4.9.2 (SC 265:44).

[60] *Dial.* 4.10.1 (SC 265:44).

[61] *Dial.* 4.10.1 (SC 265:44): *Qui descendentes ad terram causamque an ita esset acta perscrutantes, illo die inuenerunt obisse Dei famulum, quo hunc ad regna caelestia ascendisse cognouerunt.*

[62] *Dial.* 4.11.1–4 (SC 265:44–8).

According to Gregory, '[i]t often happens that the saints of heaven appear to the just at the hour of death'.[66] Indeed, the apparition of Saints Peter and Paul to the dying priest in the final story that presaged the ascent of his own soul to heaven dramatically recapitulated the point that Eustratius made in *On the State of Souls* that stories attesting to the ascent of souls also implicitly testified to the soul's ability to return here below—the notion contested at Constantinople. As Gregory presented them in his fourth dialogue, moreover, the saints' disembodied souls that were reported to have appeared to reliable witnesses at Rome were also certainly active 'in their own substance', as Eustratius argued. If they were not, the narratives would not have proved, in the face of Deacon Peter's contrary arguments, the ongoing activity of the soul *post mortem*. The combination of such stories with an attempt to prove the soul's *post-mortem* activity in the fourth dialogue thus strengthens an analogy between the rationalists and materialists whom Gregory addressed at Rome, discursively embodied in Peter, and the Constantinopolitan 'philosophers' that Eustratius rebutted. But Gregory also combined visions of the saints with apparitions of angels, Jesus, and the Virgin Mary. In his treatise Eustratius had affirmed: 'we must receive divine and angelic visions as well as those of the saints reverently and distinguish between them fittingly, acknowledging also the difference between the master and servant, and apportioning honour in like manner'.[67] By distinguishing in this manner between the three distinct orders of apparition—divine, angelic, and saintly—Gregory's narratives perhaps indirectly rebutted the contemporaneous assertion made in Constantinople that God or angels impersonated the saints' form. Neither at Rome was there was any 'play-acting', as Eustratius disparagingly put it.[68] For Gregory and Eustratius alike, every agent of a miraculous vision appeared in its own personal substance; the saintly was not to be misunderstood as a mere mode of the divine or the angelic. Each of the recipients of a vision in Gregory's narratives correctly honours the saints, angels, Mary, and even Jesus, according to their rank in the celestial hierarchy.

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[63] Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 4.12.4 (SC 265:50): *'Bene ueniunt domini mei, bene ueniunt domini mei [. . .].'*

[64] Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 4.12.4 (SC 265:50): *Cumque hoc iterata crebro uoce repeteret, quibus hoc diceret noti sui qui illum circumsteterant requirebant. Quibus ille admirando respondit, dicens: 'Numquid conuenisse hic sanctos apostolos non uidetis? Beatum Petrum et Paulum primos apostolos non aspicitis?'*

[65] Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 4.12.4 (SC 265:52): *et quia ueraciter sanctos apostolos uiderit, eos etiam sequendo testatus est.*

[66] See Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 4.12.5 (SC 265:52): *Quod plerumque contingit iustis, ut in morte sua sanctorum praecedentium uisiones accipiant, ne ipsam mortis suae penalem sententiam pertimescant, sed dum eorum menti internorum ciuium societas ostenditur, a carnis suae copula sine doloris et formidinis fatigatione soluantur.*

As mentioned, Gregory's reliable witnesses proved the authenticity of saintly visions. Each story thereby seems to convey a sense of the external verification apparently necessary in contemporary Rome.[69] One such witness was a certain Probus, 'a servant of God', and abbot of a Roman monastery, whose uncle, Bishop Probus of Rieiti, had a vision of the martyrs, Sts Juvenal and Eleutherius, as he was dying.

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[67] Eustratius of Constantinople, *Stat. anim.* (CCG 60:1852–6): *Δεῖ οὖν ἡμᾶς καὶ τὰς θείας καὶ τὰς ἀγγελικὰς καὶ τὰς τῶν ἁγίων ἐμφανείας, καὶ δέχεσθαι σεβασμίως, καὶ διακρίνειν πρεπόντως, καὶ τὴν διαφορὰν γινώσκειν δεσπότου καὶ δούλου, ὡσαύτως δὲ καὶ τὴν τιμὴν ἀπονέμειν*. See also Eustratius's earlier affirmation, cited in Chapter One of this book, that: 'whoever has a vision of the angels, sees the angels, and whoever beholds the saints' souls, sees the saints' souls': Eustratius of Constantinople, *Stat. anim.* = CCG 60:998–1000: *ὁ βλέπων ἀγγέλων ὀπτασίαν, ἀγγέλους ὁρᾷ, καὶ ὁ τὰς ψυχὰς τῶν ἁγίων θεωρῶν, ψυχὰς ἁγίων βλέπει* [. . .].

[68] See Eustratius of Constantinople, *Stat. anim.*: 'If, as you contend, divine power alone, assuming the form of the holy martyrs and other saints and servants, carries out activities and healings, then you might as well believe the same thing about the angels. For following their departure from this life, the saints' souls occupy the same rank as the incorporeal powers [. . .]. [. . .] according to you, visions of the saints take place falsely, just as in theatres people assume the characters of others and with this simulation play at their childish games' = CCG 60:1659–69: *Εἰ δὲ κατὰ ὑμέτερον λόγον μόνη τοῦ θεοῦ ἡ δύναμις, σχηματιζομένη πρὸς τὰς εἰδέας τῶν ἁγίων μαρτύρων καὶ τῶν ἄλλων ὁσίων καὶ θεραπόντων αὐτοῦ, τὰς ἐνεργείας καὶ τὰς ἰάσεις ποιεῖ, τοῦτο καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν ἀγγέλων ἐξέστω ὑμιν διανοεῖσθαι καὶ λέγειν· ἐν ἴσῃ γὰρ τάξει τῶν ἁγίων αἱ ψυχαὶ κατὰ τὴν τοῦ βίου ἔξοδον μετὰ τῶν ἀσωμάτων δυνάμεων ὑπάρχουσιν* [. . .]. [. . .] *ψευδῶς αἱ τῶν ἁγίων ἐμφάνειαι καθ' ὑμᾶς εἰπεῖν γίνονται, καθάπερ καὶ ἐν τοῖς θεάτροις ἄλλοι ὄντες ἑτέρων ὑποδύονται πρόσωπα, εἶθ' οὕτως καθ' ὑπόκρισιν τὰ τῆς παιδείας ἐπιτελοῦσιν*.

[69] *Dial.* 4.13.1 (SC 265:52).

Abbot Probus knew the story since his own father, Maximus, brother to Bishop Probus, was present that day and had himself told Probus. When the mourners left the bedside, a small boy was watching the dying bishop when 'he suddenly saw some men in white robes approaching', the 'brilliance of [whose] countenances far outshone the splendour of their garments'.[70] The boy was terrified but the dying man reassured him: '"Don't be afraid [. . .]", he said. "The two martyrs, St Juvenal and St Eleutherius are paying me a visit"'.[71] According to Abbot Probus, the serving boy, now grown up, was still alive and the story could be verified by him directly. Living witnesses also proved the reality of an apparition of St Peter the Apostle to a dying nun named Galla ('daughter of the consul and patrician, Symmachus'), a member no less of one of Rome's most distinguished senatorial families.[72] Galla reported the vision to her superior and Gregory assured his audience that the 'event is still one of the memorable events of that convent. The younger sisters now, who heard the story from the elder ones, can tell it in all its details exactly as if they themselves had witnessed the miracle'.[73]

Another story concerned a saintly cripple called Servulus, who begged alms in the portico of St Clement's.[74] As he was dying,

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[70] Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 4.13.3 (SC 265:54): *subito aspexit intrantes [. . .] quosdam uiros stolis candidis amictos, qui eundem quoque candorem uestium uultum suorum luce uincebat.*

[71] Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 4.13.3 (SC 265:54): *'Noli timere, quia ad me sanctus Iuuenalis et sanctus Eleutherius martyres uenerunt.'*

[72] This Galla is historically attested. Her sister, Rusticiana, married Anicius Manlius Severianus Boethius, translator and commentator of Aristotle, and famous throughout the Latin middle ages as the author of the *Consolation of Philosophy*. This Rusticiana may have been an ancestor of Gregory's homonymous correspondent: Martindale (1989) 2: 961; idem (1992) 3.2: 1101. Both Galla's father and her brother-in-law were executed by Theodoric the Ostrogoth between 524 and 526. The bitter memory of Theodoric among sections of Roman society late into the sixth century can be gauged from Gregory's story in the fourth dialogue concerning Theodoric's descent into hell as punishment for his persecution of Pope John I (523–6): *Dial.* 4.31.3–4 (SC 265:104–6). Gregory may have been a relation of Galla if later biographers are correct in identifying him as a member of the *gens Anicia*: Markus (1997) 8, 11.

[73] Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 4.14.5 (SC 265:58): *Quod factum nunc usque in eodem monasterio manet memorabile, sicque hoc a praecedentibus matribus traditum narrare illic subtiliter solent iuueniores, quae nunc sunt, sanctimoniales uirgines, ac si illo in tempore huic tam grandi miraculo et ipsae adfuisset.*

[74] Gregory reminded his audience that he had already narrated this story in his *Homilies on the Gospels*: *Dial.* 4.15.2 (SC 265:60) = *Hom. Ev.* 15.5.

'a fragrant odour spread through the room' accompanied by music.[75] Gregory took the fragrance as proof of his soul's ascent to heaven, where it joined with the angelic choirs. But he also assured his audience that this was not just hearsay since it had been witnessed by a monk of his own monastery.[76] There was also the story of the angelic vision enjoyed by one Romula, disciple of a certain Redempta. Gregory personally knew Romula and Redempta, who 'lived here in Rome near the Church of the Blessed Mary Ever Virgin', according to Gregory, '[a]t the time of my entrance into the monastery', as well as Redempta's other disciple whose name, Gregory says, 'I do not know, though I recognize her by sight'.[77] Both Redempta and the unnamed disciple testified that Romula's soul ascended to heaven with the angels.[78] Indeed, Gregory says that, 'Speciosus, a fellow priest of mine acquainted with the facts, bears me witness'.[79] Completing Eustratius's taxonomy of divine, saintly, and angelic apparitions, Gregory's aunt, Tarsilla, had a vision both of the soul of Pope (St) Felix III (526–30), Gregory's grandfather, and of Jesus himself in the presence, Gregory reports, of many relatives and other witnesses.[80] A vision of the Virgin came to Musa, little sister to Probus, Abbot of St Renatus in Rome, an informant for an earlier vision narrative of Gregory's. The Virgin took Musa's soul who, '[l]eaving her body here below, [. . .] set out to live with the holy virgins of heaven'.[81]

In short, each of Gregory's stories was designed to confirm, apparently against rationalist and materialist arguments to the contrary, the soul's separability and ongoing activity *post mortem*. Crucially, every story Gregory presented possessed reliable, authenticating witnesses who, in many cases, must have been well known to his Roman audience. In the saints' case, such stories were also important as evidence for their souls' immediate entry into heaven—a notion that was, as we shall see, as contentious in Gregory's Rome as it was at Constantinople.

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[75] Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 4.15.4–5: 'They were now assured that the choirs of heaven had received him into their company' = SC 265:62: *per hoc patenter agnoscerent, quod eam laudes in caelo suscepissent.*

[76] *Dial.* 4.15.5 (SC 265:62).

[77] Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 4.16.1–2 (SC 265:62).

[78] *Dial.* 4.16.7 (SC 265:66–8).

[79] For both of these, see *Dial.* 4.16.1. (SC 265:62).

[80] *Dial.* 4.17.1–3 (SC 265:69–70). Gregory also told this story in one of his *Homilies on the Gospels = Hom. Ev.* 38.

[81] Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 4.18.3 (SC 265:72): *ex uirgineo corpore habitatura cum sanctis uirginibus exiuit.*

THE *POST-MORTEM* ENTRY OF THE SAINTS INTO HEAVEN AND SINNERS INTO HELL

This chapter has argued that Gregory's fourth dialogue represents an apology for the ongoing activity of the human soul *post mortem* against arguments of a rationalist, materialist, and empiricist kind that were being put forward, apparently in Gregory's circle at Rome, in 593–4. On close inspection, both the arguments Gregory rebutted and those he himself advanced emerge as comparable to similar debates that were underway during this period at the imperial capital, Constantinople, and which are reflected in the Presbyter Eustratius's *On the State of Souls after Death*. This defence of what Gregory presents as the 'orthodox' Christian doctrine of the afterlife brought to completion his apology for the saints' miracles in the earlier dialogues, especially the second dialogue or *Life of Benedict*. At both Rome and Constantinople, a debate about the saints overflowed into a detailed revision of the meta-structure of Christian eschatology. The following section argues that the perceived demands of their mutual hagiology led Gregory and Eustratius alike into significant development of important aspects of eschatological doctrine.

If we take *On the State of Souls* as our guide, among the key issues debated at Constantinople was the condition of the saints' souls *post mortem*, and specifically their (in)activity before the Resurrection. Eustratius justified the saints' full psychological activity beyond the grave by pointing to the saints' immediate entry into heaven after the separation of soul and body. If the saints were active *post mortem* (as, according to Eustratius, their visions proved), this was because their disembodied souls entered heaven as soon as their bodies died—even before the Resurrection. Against his adversaries, therefore, Eustratius affirmed that '[r]egarding the saints' souls' present way of life, it has been clearly shown that they lead choirs in heaven with the angels; as it is reported concerning Lazarus: "And it came to pass that the beggar died, and was taken into Abraham's breast by the angels

(Lk 16:22)".'[82] Here in heaven, the saints heard the supplications of the living and interceded with God on their behalf, while God for his part enabled them to return to earth and perform miracles. In Eustratius's words, the saints 'are with Christ and intercede for us ceaselessly [. . .]. [. . .] bowing before the One seated upon the heavenly Throne, they are active as an essential property (*ἐνεργοῦσιν οὐσιωδῶς*) of their having been set in order by God, even after their separation from the body.'[83] To prove this, the priest turned to Scripture:

> Predicting this, the holy Apostle Paul said: 'We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord [. . .]' (2 Cor. 5.8). [. . .] Thus, it is impious to say that those who have exchanged this life for another are inactive. If, 'we who are in this tent groan, being burdened' (2 Cor. 5.4), as he says, then those who leave the body – so long as they were righteous like Paul – live a life without groaning [. . .], ceaselessly praising and being active.[84]

Given that St Paul had been temporarily taken up to the 'seventh heaven' while still in the body, Eustratius considered this good evidence that the same had happened *after* Paul's soul left the body. Eustratius then cited Phil 1.23–4: 'For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. [. . .] I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far [. . .]'.[85] Surely, Eustratius argued, no one would say that St Paul wished to be inactive? Clearly, Eustratius believed that the special intercessionary activities the saints performed on behalf of the faithful on earth would be seriously undermined if their souls did not enjoy this foretaste of heaven, even before the Resurrection.[86]

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[82] Eustratius of Constantinople, *Stat. anim.* = CCG 60:2210–2214: *περὶ δὲ τῆς νῦν τῶν ἁγίων ψυχῶν διαγωγῆς ἤδη σεσαφήνισται τρανῶς ὅτι καὶ ἐν οὐρανῷ μετ᾽ ἀγγέλων χορεύουσιν, ἐπει καὶ περὶ Λαζάρου φησὶν ὅτι "Ἐγένετο ἀποθανεῖν τον πτωχὸν καὶ ἀπενεχθῆναι ὑπὸ τῶν ἀγγέλων εἰς τοὺς κόλπους Ἀβραάμ*. The Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus (Lk 16.19–33) was constantly debated regarding its relative authority for the *post-mortem* activity of the saints' souls.

[83] Eustratius of Constantinople, *Stat. anim.* = CCG 60:720–5: *σὺν τῷ Χριστῷ ὄντες ἀπαύστως ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν πρεσβεύουσιν [. . .]. [. . .] προσπίπτοντες τῷ ἐπὶ θρόνου καθημένῳ, ἐνεργοῦσιν οὐσιωδῶς ὑπὸ θεοῦ στελλόμενοι, καὶ μετὰ τὴν ἀπὸ τοῦ σώματος ἐκδημίαν.*

[84] Eustratius of Constantinople, *Stat. anim.* = CCG 60:725–38: *Τοῦτο δὲ καὶ ὁ θεῖος ἀπόστολος Παῦλος αἰνιττόμενος ἔλεγεν ἐν τῇ πρὸς Κορινθίους δευτέρᾳ ἐπιστολῇ· Θαρροῦμεν δὲ καὶ εὐδοκοῦμεν μᾶλλον ἐκδημῆσαι ἀπὸ τοῦ σώματος καὶ ἐνδημῆσαι πρὸς τὸν κύριον [. . .]. [. . .] τοὺς οὖν τοιαύτην ζωὴν μεταλλάξαντας, ἀνενεργήτους εἶναι λέγειν οὐχ᾽ ὅσιον. Ἐι τοίνυν "οἱ ὄντες ἐν τούτῳ τῷ σκῆνει στενάζομεν βαρούμενοι" ὡς εἶπεν αὐτός, ἄρα οἱ ἐκδημοῦντες, εἴπερ ἐνάρετοι καὶ κατὰ Παῦλον ὄντες, ἀστένακτον ζωὴν ζῶσιν [. . .] ἀλλὰ δοξολογοῦντες ἀπαύστως καὶ ἐνεργοῦντες.*

[85] Eustratius of Constantinople, *Stat. anim.* = CCG 60:757–8.

Crucially, Gregory's *Dialogues* display that this, a seemingly inescapable *quid pro quo* for the cult of the saints, was also perceived as problematic in late sixth-century Rome. In the fourth dialogue, as we have seen, Deacon Peter tested Gregory on the soul's survival *post mortem*, and subsequently received evidence for it from the pope through the visions of the saints' souls that various reliable witnesses had apprehended at Rome or elsewhere in Italy within living memory. It was the problem of defining exactly where, *post mortem*, the saints' souls were active that appears to have been the Roman sceptics' next objection. If the saints' souls survived the body's death, where exactly did they go? From whence did they return to perform miracles on earth? Such questions form the subject of one of Deacon Peter's most important queries:

> P: I am pleased with your answer. I should now like to know whether the souls of the just are received into heaven before they are united to their bodies.
>
> G: We cannot affirm this of all the elect, for there are just souls who are delayed outside heaven, which seems to indicate that they are still lacking in perfect justice. *But nothing is more certain than that the souls of those who have attained perfect justice are received in the kingdom of heaven as soon as they leave the body.* Christ himself is our witness when he says, 'It is where the body lies that the eagles will gather'. [. . .] wherever our Redeemer is bodily present, there the souls of the just will gather.[87]

It is clear from his answer that, in response to Peter's question, Gregory presents a paradigm in which all human souls remain active after their separation from the body at the moment of death. Of these the saints' souls (*perfectorum iustorum animae*) enter heaven immediately (*mox ut huius carnis claustra exeunt, in caelestibus sedibus recipiuntur*). This was both the natural consequence both of the soul's ongoing activity *post mortem* (which Gregory has already demonstrated) and the precondition for the miracles which the saints performed (in Gregory's view, abundantly) at their shrines. Indeed, the biblical passages with which Gregory justified this idea indicate that his championing of the saints' immediate *post-mortem* glorification was controversial. Remarkably, they were the same biblical authorities Eustratius had already turned to at Constantinple. Did not St Paul say, Gregory argued, that he longed to die and be with Christ (Phil 1.23)? Thus, Gregory affirmed: 'We firmly believe that Christ is in heaven. Should we, then, not believe that the soul of Paul is there too?' There was also the evidence from the Apostle's second letter to the Corinthians in which St Paul had described death as a shedding of the 'tent' of the body and an entry into a 'heavenly dwelling, not made with hands (2 Cor. 5.1)'.

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[86] Again, *pace* Beck (1979) 41–2.

[87] Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 4.25.2–26.1–2 (SC 265:82–4): P: *[. . .] nosse uelim si nunc ante restitutionem corporum in caelo recipi ualeant animi iustorum.* G: *Hoc neque de omnibus iustis fateri possumus, neque de omnibus negare. Nam sunt quorundam iustorum animae, quae a caelesti regno quibusdam adhuc mansionibus differuntur. In quo dilationis damno quid aliud innuitur, nisi quod de perfecta iustitia aliquid minus habuerunt. Et tamen luce clarius constat quia perfectorum iustorum animae, mox ut huius carnis claustra exeunt, in caelestibus sedibus recipiuntur. Quod et ipsa per se ueritas adtestatur, dicens: 'Vbicumque fuerit corpus, illuc congrebantur aquilae,' quia ubi ipse redemptor est corpore, illuc procul dubio collegantur et animae iustorum.*

For Eustratius and Gregory's audiences, however, the saints' immediate *post-mortem* entry into heaven *did* pose a problem, not least because it apparently introduced a range of troubling innovations into Christian eschatology. It is widely accepted that early Christian eschatology had emphasized the importance of bodily resurrection and a single Final Judgement by God at the end of time when all human beings were raised from the dead and souls reunited to their bodies.[88] In the second century, Irenaeus of Lyons (*c.* 130–202) had even condemned as heretical any belief that the souls of the deceased went directly to heaven or hell upon death without awaiting reunification with the body at the Resurrection. According to Irenaeus, a universal *lex mortuorum* dictated that all human beings subsisted in an intermediate state between their subjective death and the common resurrection; only with the Final Judgement would souls, reunited to their bodies, attain their final eschatological destiny.[89] The gradual development of the cult of saints, however, bore directly upon the development of Christian eschatological orthodoxy, fundamentally altering its sequence.[90] Thus, Tertullian (*c.* 160–after 212), with

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[88] Daley (1991) 9–17; and Constas (2001) 92.

[89] On Irenaeus, see Hill (1992) 17; and Constas (2001) 94–5.

[90] Van Uytfanghe (1991) 92: 'Autant dire [. . .] que la question du culte des saints est intrinsèquement liée au problème de l'eschatologie, et que les mutations

Cyprian of Carthage († 258), conceded that, uniquely, the souls of the martyrs entered heaven as soon as their bodies died on the grounds that the martyrs' sufferings purified their souls so that any delay was unnecessary.[91] As the martyr cult received an increasing degree of public prominence from the fourth century, this view became standard and numerous Greek and Latin writers (including Ambrose, Augustine, and the Cappadocians) granted the martyrs this privilege.[92] Simultaneously, texts such as Athanasius's *Life of Antony* and Jerome's *Life of Paul of Thebes*—crucial evidence in Eustratius's treatise—played a significant role in expanding this privilege to include the souls of the ascetics, whose voluntary mortification of the flesh entitled them, as the church's new 'martyrs', to the same immediate *post-mortem* entry into heaven.[93] Yet while God judged the martyrs and ascetics worthy of entering heaven immediately, the same could not be said for all believers. It has been argued that, from the fifth century, greater anxiety is discernible among Christians towards the moment of death.[94] This also may have been linked to the spreading doctrine of immediate *post-mortem* judgement for all upon which the saints' cult was predicated.[95]

Despite these earlier developments, it seems that a fully 'updated' eschatology, predicated upon immediate judgement *post mortem* rather than the bodily Resurrection at the end of time, was not coherently articulated until the end of the sixth century. At this time, it can be argued, under the systematizing influence of an attack upon the underpinnings of the saints' cult, the church finally began to conjugate the doctrinal consequences of the saints' full psychological activity after death (and, as we shall see, the complementary problem of the liturgical commemoration of the dead) with respect to its

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intervenues dans la théologie des fins dernières ont dû déterminer celles que le culte des saints a subies, et vice-versa.' See also Piétri (1991) 25, who locates the emergence of a cult of *post-mortem* intercessors during the later third century.

[91] Daley (1991) 29–30 (Irenaeus of Lyons), 36–7 (Tertullian), 42 (Cyprian of Carthage).

[92] Van Uytfanghe (1991) 100.

[93] Piétri (1991) 34.

[94] Rebillard (1994) 29–30, 49–50, 121–24. He links it to the Pelagian controversy and Augustine's elaboration of a doctrine of original sin: ibid. 49: 'La stricte définition de la mort comme châtiment du péché originel conduit à présenter la mort comme un mal'.

[95] Van Uytfanghe (1991) 107: 'Le culte des saints intercesseurs a profité de la clarification de l'eschatologie, il a en même temps renforcé celle-ci, et a fini par concerner directement l'eschatologie des autres.'

formal eschatology and view of man.[96] In many ways, an ancient eschatology orientated towards a common Final Judgement yielded formally at this time to an expectation of subjective judgement immediately *post mortem*, as ongoing psychological activity prevailed over bodily Resurrection as a prerequisite for eschatological reward, not only for the saints but all human beings. Both *On the State of Souls* and the *Dialogues* seem to reflect almost contemporaneous attempts by a Greek and Latin theologian, respectively, to achieve logical consistency between what was implicit in the veneration of the saints and formal Christian eschatological doctrine. Both early Byzantine texts can thus be appreciated as complementary contributions to the long-term process whereby it was 'gradually acknowledged that the doctrine of the Resurrection and the cult of the saints presupposed a rather particular theological anthropology, and (given the macrocosmic character of the human being), a corresponding cosmology and eschatology'.[97]

Naturally, this was process was both controversial and complex, and there is no need to imagine that the kind of 'doctrinal development' visible in Eustratius and Gregory's works was taken up uniformly across the Christian world at this time.[98] Eschatological teaching could be systematized differently *vis-à-vis* the cult of saints and prayer for the dead, or not at all. Nor was it necessarily reflected in contemporary liturgy immediately.[99] Nevertheless, the seventh-century Gelasian Sacramentary from Rome reflected an expectation of immediate *post-mortem* blessedness for the soul (if not actual activity or immediate entry into heaven) and of the importance of the Resurrection, expressing the hope that God would 'order the soul of your servant N. to be gathered up through the hands of the blessed angels, led into the bosom of your friend Abraham the patriarch, and resuscitated on the last day of the great judgement'.[100] As we shall see, Eustratius and Gregory's position was contested, not only by their immediate opponents at Constantinople and Rome, but also by Christian writers elsewhere. For the Question and Answer writer, Anastasius of Sinai († *c.* 700), probably born in Cyprus around 600 and writing in Egypt towards 700, the saints' immediate *post-mortem* entry into heaven represented a threatening eschatological innovation. Anastasius demonstrates how his own (Melkite) Christian community still grappled with these questions under Muslim rule in Egypt at the end of the seventh century.[101] By the 860s, nevertheless, Patriarch Photius (815–97) could uncontroversially dismiss Irenaeus's early patristic view that the disembodied soul was inactive *post mortem* as the opinion of one 'who had not yet accurately weighed and tested everything'.[102] In other words, as a hallmark of medieval Christianity, especially Latin but also Greek, the notion of immediate *post-mortem* judgement was elaborated partly in order to shore up the logical foundations of the cult of saints in a context of polemic, one that was particularly acute, in view of Eustratius and Gregory's texts, at the turn of the sixth century. Some of the historical contingency of this development can be gauged from the fact that, while the doctrine won out by the mid-800s in the Latin and (to a lesser extent) Greek churches,[103] immediate *post-mortem* judgement was in fact formally rejected by the East Syriac (Nestorian) church, which, through a series of church councils at the end of the eighth century, underlined its fundamental commitment to an eschatology orientated towards the bodily Resurrection, the saints' cult notwithstanding.[104] Given its ultimate canonization in the medieval west,[105] however, it is difficult to appreciate the extent to which immediate *post-mortem* judgement may have arisen as an *ad hoc* solution for resolving an early Byzantine debate about the saints' posthumous activity before the resurrection of their bodies.

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[96] Compare Constas (2001) 119: 'eschatology is anthropology conjugated in the future tense', paraphrasing K. Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith: an introduction to the idea of Christianity*, W. V. Dych (trans.) (New York, 1978) 431.

[97] Constas (2001) 93.

[98] Cf. R. Williams (1989) 5 (italics in original): 'the most enormous questions are begged by the assumption that "religions" are fundamentally self-contained *objects*, each with a timeless inner logic and homogeneity that excludes others. Rather, in any one tradition, there may be different systems, different "logics", operating within different texts: the theoretical problem with which we are left is how our awareness of the *interplay* between such different texts might enable us to say anything about the *unity* between them.'

[99] Ntedika (1971) 118–19.

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[100] Paxton (1990) 62. See further Constable (2000) 180–5.

[101] See Dagron (1992) 62–4, and the appendix to this study.

[102] Photius, *Bibliotheca*, cod. 232 in Harnack (1923) 206 = *Photius: Bibliothèque*, R. Henry (ed.), vol. 5 (Paris, 1967) 67–79 at 67: *οὐ πάντα πρὸς ἀκρίβειαν ἐξετασάντων*.

[103] While it was almost always accepted in respect of the saints, uncertainty about immediate *post-mortem* judgement certainly lingered in the Greek tradition: Beck (1979) 50.

[104] For East Syrian eschatology, see Chapter Four of this book.

[105] The doctrine was only officially proclaimed by papal bull in by Benedict XII in 1336; in fact, 'delayed judgement' (until the Last Judgement) was still asserted by John XXII in 1334: Angenendt (1994) 102–6.

Not all early Byzantines agreed that the cult of saints was worth this innovation, however. As we shall see, Eustratius's adversaries asserted that the saints' immediate *post-mortem* entry into heaven seemed to imply two judgements, one immediately following the individual's death, the other at the end of time. After all, how could a soul enter into heaven except by being judged worthy? Since neither Eustratius nor Gregory, nor any other proponent of the saints' cult, denied that the Resurrection and Final Judgement would still occur, it was by no means clear how the one related to the other. This was all the more problematic in view of the fact that the church seemed to maintain that an individual's condition *post mortem* could be altered during the period between these two judgements through the priest's offering of the Eucharist on behalf of his or her soul. As for the saints, the doctrine's sceptics queried, if they were already in heaven, what gain could they expect at the second (Final) Judgement? Thus, at Rome Peter enquired:

> P: If the souls of the just are already in heaven, how is it that they will receive the reward for their justice on the Day of Judgement?
>
> G: The just will see an increase in their reward on the Day of Judgement inasmuch as up till then they enjoyed on the bliss of the soul. After the judgement, however, they will also enjoy bodily bliss, for the body in which they suffered grief and torments will also share in their happiness.[106]

As biblical authority for this, Gregory appealed to Revelation's description of the saints as receiving white robes in heaven from God.[107] Since God subsequently invited the saints in this passage to wait until their number was complete, Gregory takes this to indicate that the saints will actually receive two robes, the first representing their souls' entry into heaven, the second signifying the body's reward after the Resurrection. In this manner, Gregory had his eschatology both ways, the first reward justifying the saints' activity *post mortem*, while the second satisfied his audience's scruples by formally preserving the more ancient, Resurrection-orientated eschatology.[108] Eustratius considered the same passage from Revelation important evidence for the activity of the saints' souls *post mortem*. In his view, the white robes God handed to the saints stood for the 'rewards' [*μισθοὺς*] that the saints received for their faithfulness and the blessings ('their particular activity, the visions of the souls of the saints') which they 'lavished' on the faithful here below.[109] Unlike Gregory, however, Eustratius did not go so far as to say that the saints would receive 'two robes', but it could certainly be interpreted as implied by his argument.

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[106] Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 4.26.3 (SC 265:84–6): P: *Si igitur nunc in caelo sunt animae iustorum, quid est quod in die iudicii pro iustitiae suae retributione recipiant?* G: *Hoc eis nimirum crescit in iudicio, quodnunc animarum sola, postmodum uero etiam corporum beatitudine perfruuntur, ut in ipsa quoque carne gaudeant, in qua dolores pro Domino cruciatusque pertulerunt.*

[107] See Rev. 6.11.

Determined to defend the *post-mortem* activity of the saints' souls through their immediate entry into heaven, Gregory laid down the immediate *post-mortem* descent of sinners into hell as a logical corollary. But again this was controversial:

> P: [. . .] there is still one question that keeps troubling my mind. A little while ago you said the souls of the saints are already in heaven. We should therefore also believe that the souls of the wicked are in hell. I do not know what Christ taught us in that regard, human reason (*humana aestimatio*) will not allow the souls of sinners to be punished until the Day of Judgement.
>
> G: If you believe on the basis of sacred Scripture (*sacri eloquii satisfactione*) that the souls of the saints are in heaven, you must also believe that the souls of the wicked are in hell. For, if eternal justice brings God's chosen ones to glory, does it not follow that it also brings the wicked to their doom? The saints, then, rejoice in bliss, and we cannot but believe that from the day of their death the reprobate burn in fire.[110]

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[108] Of course, biblical passages could be variously interpreted. In Gaul during the 420s, Vigilantius of Calagurris cited Rev. 6.11 as biblical proof that the saints' souls were *inactive* prior to the Resurrection. Since God told the saints' souls to wait, this indicated their slumber until the Last Judgement: Hunter (1999) 426.

[109] Eustratius of Constantinople, *Stat. anim.* = CCG 60:651–52, 645.

[110] Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 4.28.6–29.1 (SC 265:98): P: *[. . .] hoc est adhuc quod quaestione animum pulsat, quia cum superius dictum sit esse iam sanctorum animas in coelo, restat procul dubio ut iniquorum quoque animae esse nonnisi in inferno credantur. Et quid hac de re habeat ueritas ignoro. Nam humana aestimatio non habet peccatorum animas ante iudicium posse cruciari.* G: *Si esse sanctorum animas in caelo sacri eloquii satisfactione credidisti, oportet ut per omnia esse credas et iniquorum animas in inferno, quia ex retributione aeternae iustitiae, ex qua iam iusti gloriantur, necesse est per omnia ut et iniusti crucientur. Nam sicut electos beatitudo laetificat, ita credi necesse est quod a die exitus sui ignis reprobos exurat.*

The influence which the saints' cult has exerted on other areas of Christian eschatology is clear from Gregory's statement: *ex qua iam iusti gloriantur, necesse est per omnia ut et iniusti crucientur*. It is interesting that Gregory should portray Peter's belief that the condemnation of sinners to hell would only take place at the Final Judgement as dictated by rational considerations, arrived at from 'human reason' (*humana aestimatio*), and hence, defective. In fact, responsibility for doctrinal development lay with Gregory rather than Peter, whose eschatological common sense seems much closer to Irenaeus's ancient view of the last things than Gregory's. If we had direct access to the arguments put forward by the Roman doubters, it is possible that we might find also in this objection of Deacon Peter's the kind of juxtaposition of outwardly conflicting biblical and patristic authorities that Stepehn Gobar employed at Constantinople at this time.[111] In any case, depicting his opponents' opinions in this way implied that Gregory did not know, or chose to ignore, that eschatological orthodoxy—so far as it ever existed—had traditionally agreed that the condemnation of the damned would not take place until the Final Judgement and that the saints' immediate *post-mortem* glorification was an exception to an otherwise inescapable law of inactivity between death and the Resurrection.[112] On the contrary, it is Gregory's relatively novel doctrine concerning the immediate *post-mortem* punishment of the reprobate that gives the impression of having been dictated by rational considerations. In a context of controversy, the inexorable logic of the saints' activity in heaven *post mortem* demanded sinners' corresponding descent into hell. It would be too much to say that the ancient Christian doctrine of the Final Judgement had to bend, at the end of the sixth century, to accommodate the late antique cult of the saints; but it clearly required updating.

Denying that this updated eschatology effectively implied two judgements was difficult, but Eustratius was certainly constrained to make this disavowal outright.[113] When his opponents pointed out that two judgements were, in fact, the logical consequence of his view of the saints' immediate *post-mortem* glorification, Eustratius admitted as much even as he denied it.[114] Eustratius was thus forced into an embarrassing and not entirely coherent alternative: human souls were universally active after death; the souls of the saints entered heaven directly and sinners' souls entered hell. But, Eustratius maintained, *this did not pre-empt the Final Judgement*. In practice, however, the judgement God exacted at an individual's death *was* the Final Judgement; there would be no other; heaven and hell began at death.[115] Eustratius's underlying commitment to the absolute necessity of the soul's activity *post mortem* competed with traditional eschatological imagery, but the former ultimately appears to have won out and constrained him to adopt a position that all but affirmed Gregory's doctrine of immediate *post-mortem* judgement and eschatological recompense for saint and sinner alike. He argued:

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[111] See Harnack (1923) 206.

[112] Compare Daley (1991) 213: 'Gregory's reflections on the details of the afterlife [. . .] are [. . .] traditional. He stresses that the souls of the just go immediately to be with Christ in bliss [. . .]. The souls of sinners, likewise, go directly to hell.'

[113] For very brief treatment of Eustratius, see Daley (1991) 200.

> They who during this life do not open the spiritual, invisible gates of heaven, [. . .] how will they find them open then, that they may be conveyed to the angels and the righteous there? Or, again, when the saints depart from heaven to come here, to whom do they bring blessing? For it is written, Eccl. 2:16: *The memory of the wise is not with the fool in eternity* [. . .] Their destinies and their dwelling-places are not the same [. . .].[116]

Eustratius's espousal of immediate *post-mortem* punishment for the wicked before the Resurrection is understandable. If the punishment of sinners were deferred until the soul's reunion with the body, he could have been understood as implying the same inactivity of souls he rebutted in regard to the saints. Allowing activity *post mortem* to be an exception enjoyed by the saints rather than a universal rule for humanity was, therefore, a threat to the saints' veneration which Eustratius could not accept:

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[114] Eustratius of Constantinople, *Stat. anim.*: 'Not unreasonably, therefore, they have said the following: "What then? Has judgement taken place before the universal resurrection?" We do not say this' = CCG 60:2147–8: *Τί οὖν; Πρὸ τῆς καθολικῆς ἀναστάσεως γέγονεν ἡ κρίσις; Οὐ τοῦτο φαμέν* [. . .].

[115] Eustratius's position was not universally accepted. Later Byzantine theologians, caught in polemic with Rome concerning Purgatory, would reassert the importance of reunification with the body for eschatological fulfillment: Constas (2001) 118–19.

[116] Eustratius of Constantinople, *Stat. anim.* = CCG 60:2149–59: *Οἱ τοίνυν ἐν τῷδε διάγοντες βίῳ καὶ μὴ ἀνοίξαντες τὰς νοητὰς καὶ ἀοράτους ἤγουν οὐρανίους πύλας, καὶ "θησαυρίσαντες ἀνεκλείπτους ἐν οὐρανῷ θησαυρούς, ὅπου οὔτε σῆς, οὔτε βρῶσις ἀφανίζει, καὶ κλέπται οὐ διορύσσουσιν οὐδὲ κλέπτουσιν", πῶς εὑρήσουσι ταύτας ἀνεωγμένας, ἵνα ἢ μετενεχθῶσιν ἐκεῖ πρὸς τοὺς ἀγγέλους καὶ δικαίους, ἢ πάλιν ἐνταῦθα παραγινόμενοι, τινὰς εὐεργετήσωσιν ὥσπερ καὶ οἱ ἅγιοι; Γέγραπται γὰρ "ὅτι οὐκ ἔστι μνήμη τοῦ σοφοῦ μετὰ τοῦ ἄφρονος εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα". Τίς γὰρ συμφώνησις "φωτὶ πρὸς σκότος"; Οὔτε γὰρ ἴσαι τούτων αἱ ἐλπίδες ἢ αἱ μοναί* [. . .].

> But perhaps you say: 'Do these [wicked] souls do anything, or are they inactive?' We shall answer that they are active, not in the same way as the saints' souls, but rather in the sense that they move and are sorrowful, just as the Rich Man said, "Father Abraham, have mercy on me" (Lk 16.24).[117]

Ultimately, Gregory's and Eustratius's answers were equally expedient, even if Gregory's transparency allowed his eschatology to appear logically coherent, while Eustratius endeavoured to disguise a significant innovation. But Eustratius's position did have an advantage: by refusing to draw an absolute caesura with the old eschatology, Eustratius occluded the anomalous position of those who were neither sufficiently holy to be considered saints, nor outright sinners. Gregory did not, leading him to another (perhaps his most famous) doctrinal innovation, viz. 'purgatory'.

PURGATORY?

Alongside the saints and reprobate sinners, the eschatological debates provoked by sixth-century questioning of the saints' cult also underlined the problem of the *post-mortem* fate of the intermediate whose souls fell between both of the poles already discussed. '[S]till lacking in perfect justice', Gregory asserted, 'they are delayed somewhere outside heaven'.[118] Faced with this problem, Gregory's ambiguous response was, as we shall see, thoroughly Byzantine and he was far from alone in formulating a solution to this question during this period. As we have seen, ancient Christian eschatology was orientated towards the Resurrection and deferred the determination of an individual's eschatological destiny until the common Final Judgement.

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[117] Eustratius of Constantinople, *Stat. anim.* = CCG 60:216–14: *Ἀλλ' ἴσως φατέ· "Τί οὖν ἐροῦσιν αἱ τοιαῦται ψυχαί, εἰ οὐκ ἐνεργοῦσιν;" Λέξομεν οὖν ὅτι ἐνεργοῦσι μέν, ἀλλ' οὐχὶ κατὰ τὴν τῶν ἁγίων ἐνέργειαν· καθ' ὃ δὲ ζῶσιν, καὶ κινοῦνται καὶ μεταμελοῦνται, ὥσπωερ καὶ ὁ πλούσιος ἔλεγεν· "Πάτερ Ἀβραὰμ ἐλέσόν με* [. . .]".

[118] *Dial.* 4.26.1 (SC 265:84): *Nam sunt quorundam iustorum animae, quae a caelesti regno quibusdam adhuc mansionibus differuntur. In quo dilationis damno quid aliud innuitur, nisi quod de perfecta iustitia aliquid minus habuerunt?*

With the rise and acceptance during the fifth and sixth centuries of a notion of immediate *post-mortem* judgement, the urgency of determining the *pre*-Resurrection condition and location of ordinary people's souls *post mortem* increased dramatically. Indeed, it seems mistaken to contrast an anxious Latin 'peccatization' of death (owing to the acceptance of the doctrine of original sin) in late antiquity with a lingering eastern expectation of God's ultimate gracious amnesty.[119] Thanks not least to the cult of the saints, in both east and west judgement no longer stood at the end of an indeterminate slumber during which God's pardoning clemency could intervene; the irrevocable decision occurred with death itself.[120]

In the 420s the problem of the intermediate had already led Augustine to consider the possible existence of a cleansing fire after death to purge imperfect souls, but he remained hesitant regarding its necessity.[121] With the defence of the cult of the saints demanding the ongoing activity *post mortem* of the souls of saints and unrepentant sinners alike, however, it was anomalous by the later sixth century not to consider ordinary baptized souls active as well.[122] But where did they go after separation from the body and what was the nature of their activity? It was in the context of this debate about the saints, therefore, that Gregory parted company with Augustine, as his fourth dialogue henceforth made purgatorial fire *post mortem* an obligatory belief:

> P: I should now like to know if we have to believe in a cleansing fire after death.
>
> G: In the Gospel our Lord says, 'Finish your journey while you still have light'. And in the words of the prophet he declares, 'In an acceptable time I have heard thee and in the day of salvation I have helped

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[119] Brown (1999*a*) 310 and (2000*c*) 47–8. Compare Daley (2001) 75–6, who argues that the doctrine of the Virgin's Dormition arose in the Greek church as an attempt to offer certainty in the next life: ibid., 73.

[120] On God's mercy, see Brown (2000*c*) esp. 42–3.

[121] Augustine, *Ciu.* 21.26 in *Saint Augustine: City of God Against the Pagans*, J. M. Green (ed.), vol. 7, Loeb (Cambridge, Mass., 1972), 146.

[122] See Ntedika (1971) 106–7: 'en affirmant [. . .] l'existence d'un feu purificateur entre la mort et la résurrection, Grégoire réduit les grandes perspectives du jugement général, qui étaient celles d'Augustin, aux étroites limites de l'eschatologie individuelle'; and Carozzi (1994) 61: 'Il y a deux lieux attestés: le Ciel où vont les âmes des justes et l'Enfer souterrain où vont celles des méchants. Le *Refrigerium* comme le Sein d'Abraham ont disparu'.

> thee'. [. . .] From these quotations it is clear that each one will be presented to the Judge exactly as he was when he departed this life. Yet there must be a cleansing fire before the Judgement (*ante iudicium purgatorius ignis credendus est*), because of some minor faults that may remain to be purged away. Does not Christ, the Truth, say that if anyone blasphemes against the Holy Spirit he shall not be forgiven 'either in this world or in the world to come'? From this statement we learn that some sins can be forgiven in this world and some in the world to come. For, if forgiveness is refused for a particular sin, we conclude logically that it is granted for others.[123]

In his answer to Peter's question here, Gregory initially followed Augustine's *City of God* quite closely, believing on the authority of 1 Cor. 3.13 ('he will be saved, yet so as through fire'), that purgation could be achieved through earthly tribulations or a painful death.[124] Like Augustine, Gregory also believed that a person earned the possibility for the expiation of sins after death, since: 'no one will be cleansed even of the slightest faults [*post mortem*], unless he had merited such a cleansing through good works performed in this life'.[125] Despite the existence of other possibilities, however, Gregory's preference was clearly for purgation by fire *post mortem* before the Resurrection:

> G: [Cleansing fire] must apply, as I said, to slight transgressions, such as persistent idle talking, immoderate laughter, or blame in the care of property, which can scarcely be administered without fault even by those who know the faults to be avoided, or errors due to ignorance

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[123] Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 4.40.13–41.3 (SC 265:146–8): P: *Discere uelim si post mortem purgatorius ignis esse credendus est.* G: *In euangelio Dominus dicit: 'Ambulate, dum lucem habetis'. Per prophetam quoque ait: 'Tempore accepto exaudiui te, et in die salutis adiuui te'. [. . .] Ex quibus nimirum sententiis constat quia qualis hinc quisque egreditur, talis in iudicio praestantur. Sed tamen de quibusdam leuibus culpis esse ante iudicium purgatorius ignis credendus est, pro eo quod ueritas dicit quia 'si quis in sancto Spiritu blasphemiam dixerit, neque in hoc saeculo remittetur ei, neque in futuro. In qua sententia datur intelligi quasdam culpas in hoc saeculo, quasdam uero in futuro posse laxari. Quod enim de uno negatur, consequens intellectus patet quia de quibusdam conceditur*. For Gregory's development on Augustine, see Le Goff (1981) 124–31.

[124] Expiation of sins before death appears to be Gregory's preferred view in *Moralia*: Dagens (1977) 424. In the seventh century, John Climacus described the expiatory value of a painful death: *Ladder* 7 = *PG* 88:812BD.

[125] Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 4.41.6 (SC 265:150): *Hoc tamen sciendum est quia illic saltem de minimis nil quisque purgationis obtinebit, nisi bonis hoc actibus, in hac uita positus, ut illic obtineat promereatur*. Cf. Augustine, *Ciu.* 21.27.

> in matters of no great importance. All these faults are troublesome for the soul after death if they are not forgiven while one is still alive.

Thus, what remained for Augustine as a possibility became for Gregory doctrine.[126]

Typically, Gregory demonstrated this with a story. While still a young layman, Gregory relates, he used to hear his elders discuss the fate of a deacon named Paschasius, 'a man of outstanding sanctity and very zealous in the practice of almsgiving' and author of a number of commendably orthodox tracts.[127] During the Laurentian Schism (498–506), however, Paschasius supported the 'anti-pope', Laurentius. For this reason Paschasius's *post-mortem* condition was not easy to determine. But Gregory affirmed that a bishop attending the baths at Rome later saw a vision of Paschasius, in which Paschasius informed him that he had been sentenced to dwell for a time in the fiery heat of the baths because of his unrepented sins. The bishop subsequently made an offering for his soul and Paschasius was no longer seen. For Gregory, the story contained a rule:

> The purification of sin after death was possible because the deacon had sinned through ignorance, and not through malice. What we are to believe is that through his previous almsgiving he obtained the grace of receiving forgiveness at a time when he was no longer able to do meritorious works.[128]

Gregory returned to the question of prayer for the dead later in the dialogue. Indeed, the interconnected nature of *post-mortem* purgation, the ritual care of the dead, and the saints' *post-mortem* activity should be emphasized: all three notions posed similar anthropological and eschatological problems, which, in view of the challenges presented by sixth-century rationalism, required coherent resolution.[129] In this setting, moreover, it is insufficient to claim that the *Dialogues*' teaching on purgatorial suffering was not authentically Gregorian, simply because it attributed new importance to that doctrine.[130]

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[126] Ntedika (1971) 106. Cf. Le Goff (1981) 121: 'Après Clément d'Alexandrie et Origène, après Augustin, le dernier « fondateur » du Purgatoire, c'est Grégoire le Grand'.

[127] None of these survives: de Vogüé, SC 265:151, n. 1.

[128] *Dial.* 4.42.4–5 (SC 265:152–4): *Quia enim non malitia, sed ignorantiae errore peccauerat, purgari post mortem potuit a peccato. Quod tamen credendum est quia ex illa elemosinarum suarum largitate hoc obtinuit, ut tunc potuisset promereri ueniam, cum iam nil posset operari.*

[129] See also Atwell (1987) 182–3 who emphasizes the pressure applied by the church's prayer for the dead in assisting the growth of an idea of purgatory.

The problematic activity of imperfect souls also occupied Eustratius whose opponents appear to have presented the church's problem in accounting for their ambiguous fate as telling against Eustratius's defence of the saints' activity *post mortem*.[131] This led Eustratius to dismiss the idea of an intermediate (μεσότης) soul outright, arguing that 'souls of those who appear in fullness of age according to law are either good or evil'.[132] According to him, at death every soul was seized by good or bad angels and taken either to eternal blessedness or eternal damnation, from which there was no escape.[133] This is strikingly different from Gregory's belief in mandatory purgatorial fire for the imperfect, but only really reveals Eustratius's focus on defending the saints' cult. That Eustratius felt compelled to pronounce an opinion on the indifferent, however, just as much as Gregory, suggests that their mutual defence of the *post-mortem* activity of all human souls, following an immediate *post-mortem* judgement, naturally led them to the same logical problem. Brian Daley has likened Eustratius and Gregory's shared concern to 'remind [their] readers of the prospect of the immediate judgement, purification, reward or damnation after death' and 'to demolish the notion that the dead are simply quiescent, or that they are incapable of continuing interaction with the living, even as they enjoy or suffer the fruits of the life they have led, in a transcendent state beyond the grave'.[134] Gregory imagined imperfect souls as purged by fire until the benefits which the prayers of the living procured for them enabled such souls to proceed to heaven. Eustratius thought less about the immediate condition of such people, but clearly paralleled Gregory's reasoning by concluding his treatise with a vigorous defence of the efficacy of the prayers and sacrifices which the church offered for the dead. Although no person was eschatologically indifferent, in Eustratius's view, there remained an important class of souls which were not saints, but which were sufficiently active to benefit from the pious offerings made by their relatives and friends.[135]

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[130] *Contra* Clark (2003) 99–103.

[131] Eustratius of Constantinople, *Stat. anim.* = CCG 60:2052–6.

[132] Eustratius of Constantinople, *Stat. anim.* = CCG 60:2057–9: μεσότης οὐκ ἔστιν, ἀλλὰ ἢ ἐν ἀρετῇ, ἢ ἐν κακίᾳ εἰσὶν αἱ ψυχαὶ τῶν ἐν τελειότητι φαινομένων τῆς κατὰ νόμον ἡλικίας [. . .].

[133] Compare Rivière (1924) 56–7 for a similar notion in Leontios of Neapolis's *Life of John the Almsgiver* (c. 642). On Leontios's awareness of seventh-century debates concerning the soul's condition *post mortem*, see Chapter Three of this book below, 216–20.

[134] Daley (2001) 79; *pace* Brown (1999*a*) 310. It is also worth noting how significantly this distinguished Gregory's vision of the afterlife from that of his fellow sixth-century Italian, Cassiodorus (*c*. 485–585), who appears to have viewed the soul as essentially dormant prior to the Resurrection. See Halporn and Vessey (2004) esp. 274.

In Greek theology as it developed following the final 'Triumph of Orthodoxy' in 843 the status of intermediate souls remained uncertain throughout the middle ages, but *post-mortem* purgation for the intermediate always remained a possibility.[136] Indeed, it is important that Gregory never spoke of *purgatorium* as a defined third space for the intermediate, in addition to heaven and hell, but only of a 'purgatorial fire' (*ignis purgatorius*) as a process. He did not teach high medieval Latin 'Purgatory'.[137] Jane Baun has recently observed that '[. . .] while Purgatory's Greek equivalent, *katharterion*, does not appear in the Greek fathers as a separate place or concept, the notion of temporary otherworld *katharsis* through punishments and trials, usually by fire, is certainly found in patristic and Byzantine teachings on the afterlife'.[138] This corresponds precisely to the situation in Latin theology before the twelfth century.[139] Indeed, Gregory's influence should not be restricted to the Latin west. Known in Greek as *ὁ Διαλόγος*, Gregory and his *Dialogues* served throughout the middle ages a source for Byzantine eschatology.[140] But the seventh century seems to have marked a high point in eschatological speculation concerning the fate of the intermediate, one that is reflected at the western end of the Mediterranean in Julian of Toledo's († 690) 'Gregorianizing' *Prognosticon*.[141]

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[135] Gregory of Nyssa was a major source for Eustratius's apology and eschatology. On his belief in purgatorial fire *post mortem*, see Alexandre (1972) 437–9. It is thus likely that *post-mortem* purgation of those not yet saints *was* part of Eustratius's eschatology.

[136] Constas (2001) 105–9; Baun (2007) 308–9.

[137] McGatch (1970).

[138] Baun (2007) 306.

[139] Le Goff (1981) 224–7, 236–40, who identifies Peter the Cantor († 1197) and Simon of Tournai († 1200) as the first Latin theologians to have systematically represented *post-mortem* purgation not merely as a condition (*ignis purgatorius*), but a distinct place (*Purgatorium*). Compare Michael Eugenikos's rejection of Latin Purgatory in the fifteenth century: the imperfect soul was in movement *towards* God, its precise location uncertain: Constas (2001) 115.

[140] See Baun (2007) 121, 124.

In the east, and reminiscent of the discussion concerning Paschasius in Gregory's Rome, a controversy erupted in Cyprus surrounding the *post-mortem* state of one Philentelus, a rich ship-owner from Constantia in about 650.[142] Despite his almsgiving, Philentelus committed fornication and his death prompted a debate between the island's bishops. A renowned local ascetic then intervened to describe a vision he received of Philentelus's soul eternally sandwiched in an intermediate state between heaven and hell, one from which eventual entry into heaven was impossible. According to the ascetic, this was the same place to which all children went who had not yet had the chance to do good or evil—an assertion that recalls the anxieties on account of which the hermit Secundinus petitioned Gregory in 599 and with which this chapter began. The Cypriot notion is not the same as Gregory's purgatorial fire, but it displays the extent to which a doctrine of immediate *post-mortem* judgement stirred eschatological debate across the Mediterranean at this time. Ultimately, the soul's slow ascent through the tollgates of heaven—tested at each stage by the imprecations of demons, uncertainly dependent upon the intercession of angels or saints—became the most common Byzantine view of the afterlife.[143] But it, too, rested upon the same activity of all human souls *post mortem* that Eustratius vigorously asserted at the end of the sixth century to defend the saints' cult. Indeed, it has been said that '[o]ne of the hallmarks of early medieval literature on the Other World, in both Latin West and Greek East, is precisely its admission of an intermediate state of souls, and of interim zones, of both reward and punishment, where souls wait for the

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[141] Julian of Toledo, *Liber Prognosticorum Futuri Saeculi = Sancti Iuliani Toletanae Sedis Episcopi: Opera*, vol. 1, CCSL 115 (Turnholt, 1976), 9–126. An exact contemporary of Anastasius of Sinai, Julian asserted, with Gregory, the universal *post-mortem* activity of souls, their continued sense-perception and fiery purgation. For discussion, see Carozzi (1994) 90–5.

[142] See Kyrris (1971); Halkin (1945).

[143] See Mango (1980) 157. A version was already present in Athanasius's *Life of Antony*: Daniélou (1956); Constas (2001) 106. For the role of angels and demons *post mortem* in the thought of the early post-Nicene fathers, see Recheis (1958) esp. 166–8, where he discusses the *Life of Antony*; also Rivière (1924) 52–4. On the tollgates as a form of *post-mortem* purgation comparable to Latin views, see Every (1976); Recheis (1958) 193–6. For spiritual escorts of the dead in pagan religion, see Cumont (1939).

Last Judgement.'[144] Even Anastasius of Sinai, who, as we shall see, held out against the full activity of the disembodied human soul *post mortem*, described the tollgates' tribulations for the disembodied soul, before apparently abandoning the idea, along with the saints' *post-mortem* activity, in his later *Questions and Answers*.[145]

In the west, the proclamation of Purgatory at the Second Council of Lyons (1274) solved the problem of the intermediate.[146] But like the Byzantine, the medieval Latin position was reached after six centuries of intermittent, at times inconsistent speculation. The two communities did not realize the full extent of their divergence until their confrontation their at Ferrara in 1438.[147] Between the sixth century and the Second Council of Lyons in 1274, moreover, Greek and Latin representations of the fate of intermediate souls beyond the grave were closer than later polemics portray.[148] Certainly, they seem to have shared common origins. The need to uphold the reality of the miracles performed by the saints beyond the grave and the efficacy of the church's care for the dead encouraged Greeks and Latins alike during the early middle ages to assert the activity of all human souls, imperfect or otherwise, *post mortem*. The ultimately divergent eschatological orthodoxy of Greeks and Latins in the high medieval period can thus be seen as developments from a common response to the complex anthropological questions which the doctrine of *post-mortem* activity raised.[149] From this perspective, in both Eustratius's *On the State of Souls* and Gregory's fourth dialogue, the reader is arguably present at some of the first prescriptive and systematic reactions in Greek and Latin theology respectively to the consequences that a doctrine of immediate *post-mortem* judgement was perceived to have signified for intermediate souls. This was a moment of considerable historical and theological importance.

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[144] Baun (2007) 306–7.

[145] Nau (1902*b*) 48; Rivière (1924) 54, referring to Anastasius's *Sermo in defunctis*, PG 89:1200: δεινοὶ τελῶναι καὶ λογοθέται καὶ φορολόγοι. It is curious that Anastasius does not mention the toll-gates at all in his *Questions and Answers*.

[146] Le Goff (1981) 380–3.

[147] As an article of controversy, Purgatory was a thirteenth-century discovery: Every (1976) 142: 'the first explicit evidence of controversy between East and West on the subject of purgatory is in 1231, and the first attack on Greeks who do not believe in it [is from] [. . .] 1252'. For Greek-Latin debates, see Dagron (1984); Ombres (1984); Le Goff (1981) 376–85; and Meyendorff (1974) 220–2. That the tollgates tradition reflected a 'Byzantine Purgatory' was both denied and affirmed in the fifteenth century: Constas (2001) 108–9. In such terms, however, the analogy was futile since before the thirteenth century, there was no Latin Purgatory either.

[148] Isidore of Seville († 636) and Julian of Toledo († 690) expected the soul to undergo demonic testing at death: Ntedika (1971) 61–2. See also Bede's († 735) very 'Byzantine' description of the fate of the imperfect *post mortem*, the soul ascending from earth tested by angels and demons: *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, B. Colgrave and R. A. B. Mynors (eds.) (Oxford, 1969), 272–74. For commentary, see Rivière (1924) 61–3; and Ntedika (1971) 112–13. It has been argued that the rise of a notion of *post-mortem* purgation in seventh-century Ireland's *Vision of Fursey* and *Life of Columba* stemmed from the textual influence exerted by Egyptian asceticism, see Smyth (2003) esp. 109–116.

THE PERCEPTIVE ABILITIES OF DISEMBODIED SOULS *POST MORTEM*

The ripples created by this debate flowed across the early Byzantine Mediterranean and raised further questions besides. If human souls were active *post mortem*, what was the particular nature of that activity? How many of the body's functions did, indeed could, the disembodied soul retain? The next question of Deacon Peter which we shall consider from Gregory's fourth dialogue should be interpreted as probing the disembodied soul's perceptive abilities. Peter desired 'to know whether the saints in heaven recognize each other and whether this recognition likewise holds true of the damned in hell'.[150] To this Gregory answered positively, affirming the disembodied soul's ongoing capacity for sense perception *post mortem*, even before the Resurrection. Again Gregory's answer aligned him with Eustratius on another contemporaneously contested question that possessed important ramifications for the saints' cult.

Gregory justified the perceptive abilities of the disembodied soul *post mortem* by arguing that for saints and sinners the perception of companions heightened their respective joy and sorrow. But their sight was not limited to those who shared their eschatological fate. The souls of the saints in heaven could also apprehend those of the damned in hell, and vice-versa. This situation increased both the sense of the saints' gratitude and the sense of sinners' remorse.[151]

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[149] See Dal Santo (2009*a*).

[150] Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 4.33.5 (SC 265:112): *Nosse uelim si uel boni bonos in regno, uel mali malos in supplicio agnoscunt.*

[151] Cf. Carozzi (1994) 48: 'il y a une sociabilité dans l'Au-delà'.

Biblical authority for the retention of the body's perceptive faculties by the disembodied soul could be found in the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus (Lk. 16.19–33), to which both Gregory and Eustratius had earlier turned to support the nature of the immediate *post-mortem* punishment of the reprobate. Thus, Gregory affirmed:

> G: Obviously, the good recognize each other and so do the wicked. If Abraham had not known Lazarus and his past trials, he surely would not have spoken to the rich man in hell about the misfortunes Lazarus had suffered in his lifetime. And if evil men did not recognize their own kind, the rich man in his torments would not have been solicitous about his absent brothers on earth.[152]

Controversially in a sixth-century setting, therefore, Gregory maintained that disembodied souls in fact enjoyed the sense of sight as effectively hereafter as they did on earth. Indeed, insofar as the saints were concerned, their perceptive abilities were enhanced since in heaven the saints were even able to recognize the souls of those they had not seen in the body.[153] It is significant that, as evidence for this latter proposition, Gregory again turned to contemporary reports of saintly apparitions at Rome, including the appearance of the Old Testament prophets, Jonah, Ezekiel, and Daniel, to a monk on his deathbed in Gregory's monastery. But apparitions of this kind were precisely the phenomenon which Eustratius's adversaries contested at Constantinople. While rationalists at both Rome and Constantinople asserted the soul's dependence upon the body, Gregory diminished the body's role, contending that if a monk, 'still shrouded in the corruptible flesh, could recognize the holy prophets whom he surely never saw before, we can readily understand what our knowledge will be in the incorruptible life of eternal glory'.[154] We have already seen that in the *Moralia*, his commentary on Job, Gregory asserted that

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[152] Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 4.34.3 (SC 265:114): *Quibus uerbis aperte declaratur quia et boni bonos et mali cognoscunt malos. Si igitur Abraham Lazarum minime recognouisset, nequaquam ad diuitem in tormentis positum de transacta eius contritione loqueretur, dicens quod mala receperit in uita sua. Et si mali malos non recognoscerent, nequaquam diues in tormentis positus fratrum suorum etiam absentum meminisset.*

[153] See *Dial.* 4.34.5 (SC 265:116): *cum antiquos patres in illa aeterna hereditate uiderint, eis incogniti per uisionem non erunt, quos in opere semper nouerunt.*

[154] Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 4.35.1 (116): *Qua in re aperte datur intellegi, quae erit in illa incorruptibili uita notitia, si uir iste adhuc in carne corruptibili positus prophetas sanctos, quos nimirum numquam uiderat, agnouit.*

'since [the saints] behold the brightness of Almighty God within, it must not be believed in any way that there is anything without of which they may be ignorant.'[155] Significantly, his view in the fourth dialogue had not changed: 'The saints behold God with a clarity common to all. Why then should anything be unknown to them in heaven where they know God, the all-knowing?'[156]

Of course, Eustratius could not escape the realization that the saints' posthumous role as intercessors and miracle-workers demanded that their disembodied souls retain the same motive and sensory faculties that they had enjoyed in their bodies. Questioning the soul's retention of these capacities of the body would have justified his opponents' claims that the saints' miracles and apparitions were illusory, a *φαντασία* actually performed by God or the angels and not the saints themselves. On the contrary, unbroken sympathy between soul and body also accounted for the power of saintly relics.[157] The parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus also featured in the debate at Constantinople. Eustratius's rationalist adversaries appear to have considered the passage good evidence for their own view of the soul's inactivity *post mortem*. They also queried why, if Abraham's soul was in fact active *post mortem* and possessed of the same faculties as the body, Abraham actually disclaimed the ability to appear on earth and forewarn the Rich Man's brothers of their relative's terrible fate. Whereas this seemed dangerously to deny the reality of the saints' visions, Eustratius offered a different interpretation of the parable, arguing that it did not affirm the saints' *post-mortem* inactivity, as the words of the parable merely signified that 'the righteous are prevented from being one with sinners'.[158] As for the saints' posthumous apparitions, Eustratius claimed that 'we have demonstrated through many examples that this can take place'.[159]

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[155] Gregory the Great, *Moralia in Iob*, 12.26 in C. Marriott (trans.), *Morals on the Book of Job*, vol. 2 (Oxford, 1845), 62 = CCL 143A:644–45: *Sicut enim hi qui adhuc uiuentes sunt mortuorum animae quo loco habeantur ignorant, ita mortui uita in carne uiuentium post eos qualiter disponatur nesciunt, quia et uita spiritus longe est a uita carnis. Et sicut corporea atque incorporea diuersa sunt genere, ita etiam distincta cognitione. Quod tamen de animis sanctis sententiendum non est, quia quae intus omnipotentis Dei claritatem uident nullo modo credendum est quia sit foris aliquid quod ignorant*. See the previous chapter of this study.

[156] Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 4.34.5 (SC 265:116): *Quia enim illic omnes communi claritate Deum conspiciunt, quid est quod ibi nesciant, ubi scientem omnia sciunt?*

[157] Constas (2001) 98.

[158] Eustratius of Constantinople, *Stat. anim.* = CCG 60:2096–7: *τὸ κεκωλύσθαι συνεῖναι τοὺς δικαίους τοῖς ἁμαρτωλοῖς*.

THE CHURCH'S CARE OF THE DEAD

At Constantinople, the rationalist critique of the saints' cult that Eustratius rebutted extended to an attack on the prayers and sacrifices which the church made at the Eucharist on behalf of the souls of the deceased.[160] After all, if the soul were dependent upon the body for its motive and perceptive faculties, and if it were no longer active after its separation from the body, in what manner could it be said to benefit from the offerings made on its behalf by the living? The rationalists' view of the soul's much curtailed activity *post mortem* rendered not only the cult of the saints, but also the church's 'care of the dead' vain and empty acts. Eustratius marked the transition from his apology for the activity of the souls of the saints *post mortem* to a new focus on defending the efficacy of the church's ritual care for the dead by writing that, 'it is asked by some whether souls obtain any benefit from oblations, and the remembrance of them in prayers'.[161] Adducing authorities from the Old and New Testaments (especially 2 Maccabees 12.38–45) as well as the Fathers (Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, Ephrem the Syrian, Cyril of Jerusalem, Anthanasius, John of Byzantium), Eustratius's answer to the rationalists' challenge was a resounding 'yes': prayer for the dead procures them real benefits in the next life, 'even if', he affirmed, 'it does not seem so to some'.[162] Whereas his opponents considered such prayers to do little more than comfort the living in their loss, Eustratius defended prayer for the dead as an effective tool by means of which the living could actually affect the condition of the disembodied souls of their friends and relatives for the better. The problem was, naturally, that his opponents misrepresented the state of the deceased. 'What advantage to the dead are the gifts offered by others, if, as you say, what takes place is not carried over to them but is only directed back towards those who offer it?', he asked. 'But they have not been transported to death, but from death to divine life!'[163] Indeed, an offering of the Eucharist was even more effective than prayers alone. Eustratius affirmed:

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[159] Eustratius of Constantinople, *Stat. anim.* = CCG 60:2095–6: *τοῦτο γὰρ ἀπεδείξαμεν πολλαχῶς ὅτι γενέσθαι.*

[160] On the church's care of the dead in late antiquity, see most recently Rebillard (2003). For the situation in the early medieval west, see Paxton (1990).

[161] Eustratius of Constantinople, *Stat. anim.* = CCG 60:2342–5: *ἔστι δὲ τοῦτο ζητητέον παρά τισιν, εἰ ἄρα ὠφελοῦνται διὰ τῶν προσφορῶν αἱ ψυχαί, καὶ τοῦ μνημονεύσθαι αὐτὰς ἐν ταῖς εὐχαῖς*. See Constas (2002) 278, with n. 26.

[162] Eustratius of Constantinople, *Stat. anim.* = CCG 60:2489: *κἂν μὴ δοκῇ τοῦτο τισίν*. On 2 Macc. 12.38–45 as authority for prayer for the dead, see Ntedika (1971) 1–7: Eustratius was the first Greek author to employ this passage for this purpose as Augustine had earlier been the first in Latin.

> Whoever is made worthy of the remission of sins by the priest's prayer, does he receive assistance or not? We shall affirm this absolutely, even if it does not seem so to some. But what prayer does, rendered oblations do even more and with much greater power![164]

Unfortunately, the manuscripts containing Eustratius's treatise terminate here. What is, however, clear is that Eustratius's asseverations on the power of the Eucharist as an effective means for assisting the dead were intrinsically linked, through his defence of the doctrine of the *post-mortem* activity of souls, to his prior defence of the saints' posthumous visions and miracles: if the souls of the saints were inactive beyond the grave, then so were those that stood in need of the church's sacramental assistance. Challenging the monopoly that the institutional church and its priests enjoyed as mediator between this world and the next may have stood close to the heart of the rationalists' purpose.[165] As a priest himself and long-standing member of the clerical establishment at the capital, moreover, Eustratius certainly had both a personal and a professional stake in the issue.[166]

The commemoration of the deceased at the Eucharist was, of course, an ancient Christian custom. But it is nevertheless clear that interest in it as a means for assisting the dead ran high at the end of the sixth century, at Constantinople and elsewhere. As we shall see, the Christian rationalist, Stephen Gobar, brought to completion a contemporary text with sentences that appear to have denied the efficacy of the church's ritual care for the dead, 'providing quotations that assert that the souls of the deceased derive great benefit from the prayers, oblations and alms made for their sake; and the opposite opinion, that this is not so'.[167] Revealing how far the debate on the afterlife was shared between Constantinople and Rome, scepticism towards the church's care of the dead reappeared in Gregory the Great's *Dialogues*. It has already been argued that Gregory's story, in the second dialogue, concerning St Benedict's absolution of two nuns *post mortem* reflected Roman anxiety manifest at the end of the sixth century concerning the church's presumed authority to alter the posthumous condition of deceased—a question linked, in turn, to the condemnation of Theodore of Mopsuestia at the Second Council of Constantinople in 553.[168] Gregory returned to the question at the end of his fourth dialogue. As equally concerned as Eustratius to affirm the activity of all human souls *post mortem*, Gregory's fourth dialogue underlines the intersection between the early Byzantine debate on the saints' cult and contemporary questioning of the Eucharist as an effective aid for the dead.[169]

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[163] Eustratius of Constantinople, *Stat. anim.* = CCG 60:2469–78: *Τί γὰρ ὄφελος τοῖς κοιμηθεῖσιν ἄλλων προσφερόντων τὰ δῶρα, ἐὰν μὴ εἰς αὐτοὺς ἀναφέρεται τὸ γινόμενον, ἀλλ᾽ εἰς τοὺς προσφέροντας ἐπαναστρέφει ταῦτα μόνον, καθῶς ὑμεῖς φατέ; Οὐ γὰρ εἰς νεκρῶν, ἀλλ᾽ εἰς ἔνθεον ζωὴν ἐκ θανάτου μετεφοιτήθησαν.*

[164] Eustratius of Constantinople, *Stat. anim.* = CCG 60:2487–91: *Ὁ διὰ τῆς ἱεραχικῆς εὐχῆς ἀξιούμενος ἀφέσεως ἁμαρτιῶν, ἆρα ὠφελεῖται, ἢ οὔ; Πάντως μὲν οὖν τοῦτο δώσομεν, κἂν μὴ δοκῇ τοῦτο τισίν. Ὅπερ οὖν ἡ εὐχὴ ποιεῖ, τοῦτο μᾶλλον δὲ καὶ πολλῷ πλέον αἱ προσαγόμεναι προσφοραὶ τοιοῦσιν.*

[165] Dagron (1992) 65 col. 1.

[166] Thus, Constas (2002) 267–8.

Gregory was prompted to do so by another of Peter's questions. The length of Gregory's response and the number of confirmatory examples he provided, suggest that the question may have represented the nub of the Roman objections, as it did at Constantinople:

> P: Is there anything at all that can possibly benefit souls after death?
>
> G: The holy sacrifice of Christ, our saving victim, brings great benefits to souls even after death, provided their sins can be pardoned in the life to come. For this reason the souls of the dead sometimes beg to have Masses offered for them.[170]

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[167] Stephen Gobar in Photius, *Bibliotheca*, cod. 232 = *Photius*, Henry (ed.), vol. 5, 79: *Πάλιν δὲ ἐπὶ τι κοινότερον μεταβαίνει, καὶ παρατίθησι χρήσεις ὅτι παντὸς τεθνεῶτος ψυχὴ ὠφελεῖται μέγιστα διὰ τῶν ὑπὲρ αὐτοῦ ἐπιτελουμένων εὐχῶν καὶ προσφορῶν καὶ ἐλεημοσυνῶν, καὶ ἐκ τοῦ ἀντικειμένου, ὅτι οὐχ οὕτω.*

[168] On this anxiety, see also Paxton (1990) 66.

[169] To Dagens, the final chapters of the *Dialogues* constitute 'un tout très cohérent', designed to 'stimuler la foi commune dans les sacraments': Dagens (1977) 418. For the range of views presented in early Byzantine Eucharistic narratives, see Déroche (2002), who notes an increase in such stories during the seventh century.

[170] Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 4.57.1–2 (SC 265: 184): P: *Quidnam ergo esse poterit, quod mortuorum ualeat animabus prodesse?* G: *Si culpae post mortem insolubiles non*

In the stories that follow to confirm this, Gregory insisted upon two points. First, only the Mass sacrificed by the priest could procure the blessed rest of the dead—provided, as Augustine had earlier cautioned, that the latter had led lives worthy of such assistance. Secondly, the offering of the Mass operated in real time, assisting souls at the very moment it was offered for them. No more than Eustratius, in other words, did Gregory countenance the view that the power of the Mass should be doubted or that it merely obtained 'psychological' benefits for the living.

Recalling his earlier story about the Deacon Paschasius, Gregory related that a priest attending the baths at Rome was once met by a stranger who acted as his bath attendant. The priest offered him some bread as a token of his appreciation. But the stranger refused it, saying, 'If you wish to do something for me, then offer this bread to almighty God and so make intercession for me, a sinner'.[171] The priest said Mass for the man daily for one week. When returning to the baths, he never saw his soul again. Gregory commented that '[the] incident points out the great benefits souls derive from the sacrifice of the Mass', adding that '[b]ecause of these benefits the dead ask us, the living, to have Masses offered for them, and even show us by signs that it was through the Mass that they were pardoned'.[172] But this suggests, of course, that precisely this notion was doubted. Gregory also narrated the punishment and posthumous pardon of a monk named Justus from Gregory's own monastery. Before Justus died he revealed that, against monastic discipline, he had retained three gold pieces. Gregory ordered that Justus be kept in isolation and, once dead, that his body be thrown into a manure pile. Yet Gregory later repented of his harshness and sought a way to help Justus's soul. He thus ordered the Eucharist to be celebrated for him daily for thirty

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sunt, multum solet animas etiam post mortem sacra oblatio hostiae salutaris adiuuare, ita ut hoc nonnumquam ipsae defunctorum animae uideantur expetere. This follows a question from Peter regarding church burial, which Gregory claims is useful for the dead only inasmuch as it reminds a person's friends and relatives to pray for their souls. Here Gregory is clearly following Augustine's treatise *On the Care of the Dead*: de Vogüé, SC 265: 177, 199–200; and Carozzi (1994) 56.

[171] Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 4.57.6 (SC 265:186): *Si autem mihi praestare uis, omnipotenti Deo pro me offerre hunc panem, ut pro peccatis meis interuenias.*

[172] Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 4.57.7 (SC 265:186–8): *Qua ex re quantum prosit animabus immolatio sacrae oblationis ostenditur, quando hanc et ipsi mortuorum spiritus a uiuentibus petunt, et signa indicant quibus per eam absoluti uideantur.*

days.[173] The night following the final Mass, Justus appeared to another monk in a dream, who, unaware of the Masses that had been celebrated for him, struggled to make sense of Justus's words: '"Up to this moment I was in misery, but now I am well, because this morning I was admitted to communion"'.[174] When the simultaneity of Justus's apparition with the completion of the Masses was realized, all were amazed. To Gregory, it confirmed the Mass's authentic power:

> G: At the very moment, therefore, when they became mutually aware of what had taken place, they realized that the vision and the completion of the thirty Masses occurred at one and the same time. They were now convinced that the brother who had died was freed from punishment through the sacrifice of the Mass.[175]

Of course, the apparition of Justus was equally good evidence for the ongoing activity of the soul *post mortem*. Nevertheless, the apologetic note in both stories suggests that precisely the opposite view was being alleged in Gregory's Rome, as it was in contemporary Constantinople.

Fortunately, Gregory had other stories that confirmed the efficacy of the Eucharist. These concerned not only the dead, but also the living so that in case the testimony of the dead should be found wanting, 'the experience of living persons [should] strengthen our faith in the words of the dead', as Gregory put it.[176] Again, Gregory stressed the simultaneity between offering and receipt of benefit. A Roman soldier was taken captive by the Lombards and put in chains. Believing him dead, his wife had Mass celebrated for him regularly. When the soldier was freed, he recounted to his wife how he had been mysteriously released from his chains on certain days, and 'she instantly recalled that these were the days on which she had Mass offered for him'.[177] Similarly, a sailor was lost at sea during a storm. His friend, a bishop, remembered him in the Mass. Clinging to his boat, the sailor was about to expire when someone appeared to him and gave him bread. When the man was finally rescued, the bishop discovered that 'the boatman was saved the very day the holy sacrifice had been offered for him'.[178] Why then doubt the Mass's power over the disembodied souls of the deceased if it even delivered the living? Rejoining Eustratius's polemic in *On the State of Souls after Death*, Gregory believed that such 'miracles were openly performed for living persons who were unaware of the source of their benefits, in order that those who offer the holy sacrifice, without adverting to its efficacy (*cunctis haec agentibus atque nescientibus*), might come to understand that deceased persons, too, can be absolved from sins through the Mass [. . .]'.[179] The Mass's ability to assist souls *post mortem* was clearly not a consensus.[180] Indeed, the practice remained the subject of discussion during the seventh century, not only at Rome and Constantinople, but also at other centres in the early Byzantine world.

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[173] This episode is often posited as the origins of the 'Gregorian trental': Ntedika (1971) 110. For further commentary, see Leyser (2000*a*) 153–5. The story became famous and was passed, by Gregory's followers, to the circle around John Moschus and from there into various collections in Greek, Georgian, and Arabic: Thacker (1998).

[174] Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 4.57.15 (SC 265:192): *Nunc usque male fui, sed iam modo bene sum, quia hodie communionem recepi.*

[175] Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 4.57.16–17 (SC 265:194): G: *[. . .] uno eodemque tempore dum cognoscit ille isti quid egerant atque isti cognoscunt ille quid uiderat, concordante simul uisione et sacrificio, res aperte claruit, quia frater qui defunctus fuerat per salutarem hostiam supplicium euasit.*

[176] Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 4.58.1 (SC 265:194): *Ne nobis in dubium ueniant uerba mortuorum, confirmant haec facta uiuentium.*

ECHOES OF STEPHEN GOBAR IN LATE SIXTH-CENTURY ROME?

So far we have seen how Gregory the Great's *Dialogues on the Miracles of the Italian Fathers* appear to reflect many of the rationalist-inspired arguments against the cult of the saints which Eustratius of Constantinople rebutted in his *On the State of Souls after Death*. We have seen just how far Gregory's views of the afterlife seem to have paralleled Eustratius's eschatological opinions. There are several reasons for believing that the origins of this early Byzantine debate about the saints and the afterlife possibly reached back to philosophical speculation at Constantinople during second half of the sixth century. Nicholas Constas has tentatively identified the source of the arguments rebutted by Eustratius in the *On the State of Souls* with a form of sixth-century Aristotelianism and the miaphysite theologian, Stephen Gobar, in particular.[181] A student of John Philoponus, Gobar, it is argued, was hostile towards many of the established traditions of the church and in the name of Aristotelian rationalism threw into question, among other things, the nature of the afterlife and the soul's separability from the body.[182] Like Eustratius's opponents (and apparently Gregory's audience at Rome), Gobar saw no benefit in the prayers and oblations made for the dead. If not to Gobar himself, then Eustratius's treatise in defence of the saints and the church's ritual care for the dead must have been addressed to those subject to his influence in the imperial capital.[183]

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[177] Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 4.59.1 (SC 265:196): *eiusque coniux illos fuisse dies quibus pro eo offerebat sacrificium recognouit [. . .]*. An almost identical story was told *c.* 642 by Leontius of Neapolis in his *Life of John the Almsgiver*. See the following chapter.

[178] Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 4.59.5 (SC 265:198): *illum fuisse diem repperit, quo pro eo [. . .] omnipotenti Domino hostiam sacrae oblationis immolauit.*

[179] Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 4.59.6 (SC 265:200): *Idcirco credo quia hoc tam aperte cum uiuentibus ac nescientibus agitur, ut cunctis haec agentibus atque nescientibus ostendatur, quia si insolubiles culpae non fuerint, ad absolutionem prodesse etiam mortuis uictima sacrae oblationis possit.*

[180] We may also recall the note of doubt (*quis enim fidelium habere dubium possit [. . .]*) in Gregory's description of the Eucharist cited in the previous chapter: Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 4.60.3 (SC 265:202).

Gobar's text survives only in a ninth-century summary by Photius, but nevertheless offers a precious window into intellectual culture in the East Roman world after the death of Justinian.[184] Photius himself possessed little information about the author whose work he summarized, other than that he was a 'Tritheist', and freely appended his own comments and judgements to Gobar's work. Harnack thought that the epithet, Gobar, appended to the name Stephen might have derived from the Syriac *gbar*, meaning 'man' or 'hero', although he conceded that that could not be proved.[185] The author cannot be assimilated to any other known Stephen.[186] Despite the vagaries involved in the author's identification, Harnack dated Gobar's text to the reign of Justin II (565–78), since Gobar described Origenism as a heresy and Photius considered Gobar to be a subscriber to the heresy of Tritheism.[187] Certainly, the categorization of Origenism as a heresy suggests that Gobar was writing after Origen's anathematization at the Second Council of Constantinople in 553, while Tritheism associates him with John Philoponus's heterodox views on the Holy Trinity expressed at the end of his life (*c.* 570–80). But the aporia which Gobar raised regarding the date of Christ's Nativity is also important, as it assumes knowledge of (and essentially undermines) an edict Emperor Justinian issued on the subject in 561.[188] Gobar's work must, therefore, post-date Justinian's edict, which sought to lay down an official date for Christ's birth in order to establish a universally recognized date for a new feast dedicated to Mary's Annunciation. But it may also ante-date Emperor Maurice's introduction (according to a fourteenth-century history) of a feast for the Virgin's Dormition, which, if it had existed, Gobar might be expected to have problematized as well.[189] In any case, these dates place the appearance of Gobar's text close in time to that of Eustratius's *On the State of Souls*, which, as we have seen, must have been composed between the death of Patriarch Eutychius of Constantinople in 582 and the overthrow of Maurice's government in 602.

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[181] Constas (2002) 280–1.

[182] Harnack (1923) 218. On Philoponus, see Sorabji (1987); and Wildberg (2003, rev. 2007). On Philoponus as a Christian thinker, see Chadwick (1987). For the historical context, see MacCoull (2006 and 2007).

[183] Constas (2002) 281. That Gobar was active at Constantinople can only be implied.

[184] For the wider context, see Wildberg (2005).

[185] That he may have been a Syrian miaphysite is suggested by a few other points, though none is conclusive. Among the authorities he seems to favour are Severus of Antioch (which is to be expected from a miaphysite), and also Titus of Bostra, whose works were early translated into Syriac. See Pedersen (2006).

[186] Stephen Gobar is not to be confused with either Stephen of Alexandria or Stephen of Athens: Wolska-Conus (1989).

As we have it, Gobar's work is a curious juxtapositioning of theses and antitheses, whose purpose, it has been alleged, was to sow doubt and engender debate regarding a wide range of Christian teachings viewed as logically or philosophically problematic. According to Harnack, who published an English translation of Photius's *résumé* of the text in 1923, 'the chief intent of [Gobar's] work was to overthrow church tradition as such'.[190] Gobar's collection of seventy theses and antitheses was arranged in two groups. The first of these

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[187] Harnack (1923) 216. On Tritheism, see Ebied, Wickham, and van Roey (1981) 33: 'Tritheism is a rationalistic approach which seeks to explain the divine by concepts and principles derived from the created order'. Compare Lang (2001), who emphasizes Tritheism's theological rather than philosophical underpinnings.

[188] Stephen Gobar §3 = Photius, *Bibliotheca*, cod. 232 in Harnack (1923) 207 = *Photius*, Henry (ed.), vol. 5, 68. On Justinian's edict, see van Esbroeck (1968).

[189] On Maurice and the Feast of the Dormition, see Daley (2001) 80–1; and Cameron (1978) 86–7.

[190] Harnack (1923) 220. I have changed Harnack's 'Gobarus' to 'Gobar'. For the Greek, see Photius, *Bibliotheca*, cod. 232 in *Photius*: *Bibliothèque*, R. Henry (ed.), vol. 5 (Paris, 1967), 67–79. Other important studies of Gobar include Bardy (1947) and (1949).

Photius labelled 'ecclesiastical', a collection of fifty-two chapters dealing with diverse topics taken from church dogma and the ecclesiastical calendar. The second group of eighteen chapters Photius called 'particular' since they address 'particular' opinions expressed by identified authorities. It is important to note that in all seventy chapters Gobar did not present his reader with continuous prose, but with pairs of juxtaposed sentences. In Photius's words, these sentences are 'presented not only as pairs, but as contradictory; yet the sentences are not substantiated by argument or proof-texts, but merely by the utterances [. . .] of divergent Fathers. Of these utterances one set maintains the view of the church, the other that which the church rejects.'[191] Gobar's method was sufficient for Photius, otherwise admiring of Gobar's industry, to sense heterodoxy.[192] As the text itself bore no title, Harnack called it a 'Sic et Non', deliberately invoking the dialectical form Peter Abelard employed in twelfth-century Paris. Harnack concluded that Gobar's work was no mere scholastic exercise: it represented rather a profoundly subversive demonstration of the contradictions of the church fathers. Gobar's was a 'murderous book', whose aim was to 'discredit tradition in all fields by demonstrating its contradictions with reference to the doctrines of God and Christ, of the perishable and the imperishable, of heaven, paradise, and hell, of the Bible, history, and chronology'.[193] The text's later student, Gustave Bardy, agreed and wondered at the ninth-century Patriarch's relative toleration of Gobar's ideas: 'Photius seems to say that the work [. . .] was more curious than dangerous. Perhaps this is decidedly optimistic.'[194]

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[191] Harnack (1923) 206.

[192] Harnack (1923) 206 = *Photius*, Henry (ed.), vol. 5, 67: τὸ δὲ βιβλίον πόνων μὲν ἐδόκει μακρῶν, κέρδος δ' ἔφερε τῆς πολλῆς οὐχ ὅμοιον σπουδῆς· φιλοτιμίαν γὰρ μᾶλλον ἢ χρείαν ἐπεδείκνυτο περιττήν.

[193] Harnack (1923) 226. Compare Wildberg's (2003, rev. 2007) description of Gobar's putative master, Philoponus as one who had 'shaken off the authority of Aristotle's or anyone else's authority, and far from attempting to demonstrate the harmony between the philosophers, he puts himself forward as a philosopher who dissents from the recognized philosophical authority. The commentator has turned into a critic with independent philosophical ideas of his own.' It is easy to imagine Gobar's work as inspired by a similar spirit.

[194] Bardy (1947) 30: 'Photius semble dire que le travail d'Étienne Gobar était plus curieux que dangereux. Peut-être est-ce bien optimiste'. Both Gray and Cameron have demonstrated how subversive the juxtaposition of contradictory statements from the Fathers could be in a sixth-century setting where the appeal to tradition figured as the discursive arbiter *par excellence* of the Christological disputes

Gobar's precise views on many subjects are not necessarily easy to determine, but there can be no doubt that they were intended as a contribution to wider sixth-century debates. Thanks to the publication of the surviving fragments of Philoponus's tract *On the Resurrection*, it is possible to appreciate how close Gobar stood to the latter on this subject. Around 574 the Egyptian John Philoponus published a tract on the Resurrection that aimed to demonstrate that the body which the soul assumed in the Resurrection was not—indeed, *could not* be—the selfsame assemblage of flesh and blood with which the soul had been united during its terrestrial existence.[195] To Philoponus, it was axiomatic that a corruptible substance, like the corporeal body, had to remain that way; at the Resurrection, therefore, the soul would receive an entirely new kind of body, one that was noetic or pneumatic, and which had nothing to do with the corruptible flesh which the soul had known here below. Although it has been suggested that Gobar belonged to a rival tritheist party that rejected Philoponus's teaching on the Resurrection, this view is difficult to sustain in the light of Gobar's work.[196] On the contrary, Gobar seems to have been attached to Philoponus's notion of a new, pneumatic body in the Resurrection as to something of extreme importance. This can be clearly inferred from Chapter 37 where Gobar records the following pair of sentences: 'Every originated thing is corruptible and mortal, but by the will of God it persists as if indissoluble and incorruptible - That which is by nature corruptible cannot be incorruptible by the will of God, for whoever affirms that contradicts himself and ascribes to the Creator that which is impossible.'[197] The subject under discussion here is the body and, as Photius realized to his exasperation, Gobar's sympathies lay clearly with the more controversial second statement, a statement which we can now recognize as a very close

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of the day, especially the acceptance of Chalcedon: Gray (1989) 34–6; Cameron (1991c) 106–8, (1992a) 266–8.

[195] For the surviving fragments of this text, see van Roey (1984).

[196] Van Roey (1984) 124: 'On peut sans doute compter parmi les Cononites le trithéiste Étienne Gobar qui défendait la thèse selon laquelle à la résurrection nous reprendrons un corps absolument identique à notre corps actuel.' This is clearly a mistake.

[197] Stephen Gobar §37 = Photius, *Bibliotheca*, cod. 232 in Harnack (1923) 210 = *Photius*, Henry (ed.), vol. 5, 74–5: *Ὅτι πâν γενητὸν φθαρτόν ἐστι καὶ θνητόν, βουλήσει δὲ Θεοῦ διαμένει ἄλυτον καὶ ἄφθαρτον· καὶ ἐκ τοῦ εναντίου, ὅτι τὸ φύσει φθαρτὸν οὐ δύναται ἄφθαρτον εἶναι βουλήσει Θεοῦ· ἐναντία γὰρ δοξάζει ἑαυτῷ ὁ τοῦτο λέγων, καὶ ἀδύνατα χαρίζεται τῷ δημιουργῷ.*

rendering of the thought behind Philoponus's *On the Resurrection*.[198] Gobar also dealt with the Resurrection elsewhere in his work, again in a manner that displays his familiarity with Philoponus's opinions.[199] Harnack also recognized that the chapters of Gobar's work touching on the proper dating of the Last Supper were also tied up with Philoponus and his tract, *On the Pasch*.[200]

As we saw in the previous chapter, however, as papal *apocrisarius* at Constantinople from 579 to 585/6, Gregory the Great engaged in a hotly contested debate with Eustratius's patron, Patriarch Eutychius, on the nature of the resurrection body. Even at that time it was suggested that Philoponus's tract was the inspiration for Eutychius's views.[201] Remarkably, however, it is Gobar's text that could serve as a succinct *précis* of their respective positions, at least insofar as Gregory represented them in his *Moralia*:

(a) 1.4: At the resurrection we shall receive the same body in every respect which we have now, without distinctive addition in respect of corruptibility – We shall not have the same body as this corruptible one;
(b) 1.5: We shall rise in the same form – We shall rise in another form; [. . .]
(c) 1.7: At the resurrection we shall receive a tenuous body, airy, ethereal and spiritual – No, rather one earthy, substantial and solid.[202]

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[198] Stephen Gobar §37 = Photius, *Bibliotheca*, cod. 232 in Harnack (1923) 210 = *Photius*, Henry (ed.), vol. 5, 75: *Ὁ δὲ Γόβαρος τὸν ἑλληνικὸν ἔλεγχον εἰς ἀνατροπὴν ἐκβιάζεται χρῆσθαι τοῦ φρονήματος τοῦ ἐκκλησιαστικοῦ.*

[199] In Chapter 25 of the Cononite refutation of Philoponus, we read that Philoponus held that: 'The flesh of the Lord disappeared at the moment of his resurrection and now He is without flesh'; and again 'If a mortal body was begotten from the mortal body of Mary, Mother of God, this body must also be transformed into incorruptibility, that is to say, this body, being corruptible, must disappear with the resurrection, and in its place another incorruptible [arise].' This bears close comparison with Gobar's Chapters 19 and 20, while 21 seems a very concise expression of the Aristotelian principle that motivated Philoponus's thinking on the subject in the first place.

[200] Harnack (1923) 218. See also MacCoull (1999).

[201] John of Ephesus, *Ecclesiastical History* II.42, Payne Smith (ed. and trans.) (Oxford, 1860) 149. See also Duval (1986).

[202] Stephen Gobar §§ 4, 5, 7= Photius, *Bibliotheca*, cod. 232 in Harnack (1923) 207 = *Photius*, Henry (ed.), vol. 5, pp. 68–9: *Ὅτι ἐν τῇ ἀναστάσει τὸ αὐτὸ σῶμα κατὰ πάντα, ὃ καὶ νῦν περικείμεθα, ἀποληψόμεθα, μηδεμίαν διαφορὰν ἐπὶ τὸ ἄφθαρτον προσειληφότες· καὶ τὸ ἀντικείμενον, ὡς οὐ τὸ αὐτὸ σῶμα τῷ νῦν ἀναληψόμεθα φθειρομένῳ. Ὅτι ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ σχήματι ἀναστησόμεθα· καὶ ὅτι οὐκ ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ ἀλλ' ἐν ἑτερῷ. [. . .]. Ὅτι λεπτὸν καὶ ἀερῶδες καὶ αἰθέριον καὶ πνευματικὸν ἐν τῷ καιρῷ τῆς ἀναστάσεως ἀποληψόμεθα τὸ σῶμα· καὶ ὅτι οὐ τοιοῦτον ἀλλὰ γηινὸν καὶ παχὺ καὶ ἀντίτυπον.*

Certainly, an 'earthly, substantial and solid body' was what Gregory advocated in the face of Eutychius's innovations, a fact which allows Gregory's intervention to be seen as part of the Greek debate itself, rather than the reflection of a 'Latin' failure to understand it. Indeed, it will be argued here that many of the arguments Gregory rebutted in his *Dialogues* were within a heartbeat of Gobar's views and that his fourth dialogue, in particular, must have been intended to address the impact of rationalist speculation at Rome that owed its roots to the kind of method and reasoning that Gobar pursued at Constantinople.

As we have seen, Nicholas Constas, the most important modern commentator of Eustratius's apology for the ongoing activity of the souls of the saints *post mortem*, has suggested that we search for the origins of this critique in Gobar. The pairs of opposing sentences from Gobar in which Constas found significant resonance of the ideas which Eustratius rebutted include the following:

(a) 1.33: 'The breath which God breathed into Adam's face was temporal, and not, like the spirit, eternal – It was not temporal, but an immortal soul',[203]

(b) 1.36: 'After death the soul departs neither from the body nor from the grave – The soul does not remain with the body nor in the grave',[204]

(c) 2.18: 'every departed soul has great advantage from the prayers and sacrifices and alms offered in his behalf – on the contrary, that it does not'.[205]

Inasmuch as Gobar's intention with these sentences was to demonstrate the inconsistency of the biblical and patristic authorities that supported them, these chapters, which can be read as denying the immortality of the soul (1.33), its ongoing activity *post mortem* (1.36), and the church's sacramental care for the dead (2.18), clearly resonate with the kind of arguments that Eustratius rebutted in his treatise—and, indeed, that we have observed Gregory also refute at Rome. And another chapter from Gobar, with potentially Aristotelian inspiration, can be related to the debate about the saints' cult equally compellingly:

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[203] Stephen Gobar §33 = Photius, *Bibliotheca*, cod. 232 in Harnack, '"Sic et Non"', 210 = *Photius*, Henry (ed.), vol. 5, p. 74: *Ὅτι ἡ πνοή, ἣν ἐνεφύσησεν ὁ θεὸς εἲς τὸ πρόσωπον τοῦ Ἀδάμ, πρόσκαιρος ἦν καὶ οὐχ ὡς τὸ πνεῦμα αἰώνιον· καὶ ὅτι οὐ πρόσκαιρος ἦν ἀλλὰ ψυχὴ ἀθάνατος.*

[204] Stephen Gobar §36 = Photius, *Bibliotheca*, cod. 232 in Harnack (1923) 210 = *Photius*, Henry (ed.), vol. 5, 74: *Ὅτι μετὰ θάνατον ἡ ψυχὴ οὔτε τοῦ σώματος οὔτε τοῦ τάφοῦ χωρίζεται· καὶ ἐκ τοῦ ἀντικειμένου, ὅτι παραμένει τῷ σώματι ἡ ψυχὴ οὔτε τῷ τάφῳ.*

[205] Stephen Gobar § 2.18 = Photius, *Bibliotheca*, cod. 232 in Harnack (1923) 212 = *Photius*, Henry (ed.), vol. 5, 79: *Πάλιν δὲ ἐπὶ τι κοινότερον μεταβαίνει, καὶ παρατίθησι χρήσεις ὅτι παντὸς τεθνεῶτος ψυχὴ ὠφελεῖται μέγιστα διὰ τῶν ὑπὲρ αὐτοῦ ἐπιτελουμένων εὐχῶν καὶ προσφορῶν καὶ ἐλεημοσυνῶν, καὶ ἐκ τοῦ ἀντικειμένου, ὅτι οὐχ οὕτω.*

> (1.30): 'Human souls are rational bodies shaped like the external corporeal form and appearance of man – The soul is incorporeal and not subject to bodily shapes'.[206]

Certainly, the ability of the disembodied soul to assume a bodily likeness was crucial to Eustratius's defence of the saints' apparitions. Eustratius seems to have acknowledged Gobar's critique directly when he wrote in his treatise: 'But perhaps they propose another problem for us, namely: "How do the disembodied souls of the saints sometimes appear arrayed in armour, even with other figures, or horses or other identifying features, if they now exist naked and bodiless?" We answer that, just as the angels, who are bodiless, [. . .] imprint visions according as those who receive [them] appear worthy, so, likewise, the impressions which the souls [of the saints] imprint are not physical, but nonetheless true.'[207] Not only Gobar, but also Philoponus seems to have recognized the formlessness of the disembodied soul in the commentary on Aristotle's *De Anima* which he composed early in the sixth century.[208] 'From where do shadowy phantoms appear at graves?' wrote Philoponus, 'For clearly the soul has neither assumed a definite form nor is wholly visible.'[209] There is no record that Philoponus challenged the saints' cult or prayer for the dead on the grounds of Aristotelian psychology. Yet he clearly seems to have recognized the problems it contained for the soul's posthumous activity, and resorted to the notion of a 'pneumatic body' to account for the disembodied soul's ability both to appear to the living and undergo punishment *post mortem*.[210]

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[206] Stephen Gobar §30 = Photius, *Bibliotheca*, cod. 232 in Harnack (1932) 209 = *Photius*, Henry (ed.) vol. 5, 73: *Ὅτι σωματά εἶσι νοερὰ αἵ τῶν ἀνθρώπων ψυχαί, καὶ διατετυπωμέναι κατὰ τὸ φαινόμενον ἔξωθεν τοῦ σώματος σχῆμα· καὶ ἐκ τοῦ ἀντικειμένου, ὅτι ἀσώματός ἐστιν ἡ ψυχὴ καὶ σωματικοῖς οὐχ ὑπόκειται τύποις.*

[207] Eustratius of Constantinople, *De statu animarum post mortem* = CCG 60.2005–13: *Ἀλλ' ἴσως καὶ ἑτέραν ἀπορίαν ἡμῖν προβάλλονται λέγοντες: "Πῶς αἵ ἀσώματοι ψυχαὶ τῶν ἁγίων πανοπλίαν ἔσθ' ὅτε μὲν καὶ ἑτέρων σχημάτων ἢ ἵππων ἢ ἄλλων τινῶν συμβόλων ἐπιφέρονται, γυμναὶ καὶ ἀσώματοι νῦν τυγχάνουσαι;" Λέγομεν οὖν ὅτι ὥσπερ οἵ ἄγγελλοι ἀσώματοι ὄντες* [. . .] *τὰς ὁράσεις τυποῦσι καθὼς ἂν οἵ ὑποδεχόμενοι φανεῖεν ἄξιοι, οὕτω καὶ αἵ ψυχαὶ τὰς τυπώσεις οὐ φυσικὰς μέν, ἀληθινὰς δὲ ὅμως ποιοῦσιν.*

[208] Philoponus seems to have composed the commentary early in his career, probably before 517: Sorabji (1987) 40; Todd (1984) 103; MacCoull (1995*a*) 49–50. Note also Wildberg (2003, rev. 2007): 'The commentary on Aristotle's *On the Soul* is perhaps the earliest to contain passages in which Philoponus abandons at times proper exegesis in order to criticize Aristotelian doctrine'. See also Lang (2001) 38.

[209] Philoponus, In *De Anima*, M. Hayduck (ed.), Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca 15 (Berlin, 1897), 19.27–9: *πόθεν ἐν τοῖς τάφοις τὰ σκιοειδῆ φαίνονται*

We have seen how Gregory touched on many of these same topics in his fourth dialogue, as well as the strength of the apparently rationalist position at Rome that led him to do so. The direct comparison between Gobar's sentences and Gregory's fourth dialogue indicates perhaps further links between Gobar and the defenders of the saints' cult at the end of the sixth century. Many of Gobar's chapters can be compared directly to Gregory's fourth dialogue without the mediation of Eustratius's treatise. In his chapter (14), for example, Gobar questioned the eternity of hell: 'Those sinners who are given up to punishment are thereby purified of their wickedness and after their purification freed from punishment [. . .] – No one [. . .] is freed from punishment'.[211] This aporia clearly belongs to the Origenist controversies of the sixth century.[212] While the question had apparently been settled by the end of the sixth century through Origen's condemnation at the Second Council of Constantinople in

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φάσματα; οὐ γὰρ δή γε ἡ ψυχὴ ἢ ἐσχημάτισται ἢ ὅλως ἐστὶν ὁρατή. A partial French translation can be found in G. Verbeke, *Jean Philopon: Commentaire sur le* De Anima *d'Aristote*, Corpus Latinum Commentarium in Aristotelem Graecorum 3 (Louvain, 1966).

[210] Cf. Todd (1984) 108–10. The concept itself Philoponus doubtless owed to the late antique Neoplatonist tradition: Wallis (1972) 108; and Dodds (1963) 313–21. I thank Peter Turner for these references. See also Verbeke (1966) xxxv–xxxvi. Suggesting that he himself may have had the saints' apparitions in mind, it is noteworthy that in his commentary Philoponus had already spoken of visions occurring 'at tombs', and even postulated that a diet of light and dry foods, of the kind that the righteous (*σπουδαῖοι*) pursued, increased the beauty of the pneumatic body revealed to the living: Philoponus, *In de Anima* = Hayduck, 19.20–4.

[211] Stephen Gobar §14 = Photius, *Bibliotheca*, cod. 232 in Harnack (1923) 208: = *Photius*, Henry (ed.), vol. 5, 70: *Ὅτι οἱ ἐν τῇ κολάσει παραδιδόμενοι τῶν ἁμαρτωλῶν καθαίρονται τῆς κακίας ἐν αὐτῇ, καὶ μετὰ τὴν κάθαρσιν ἀπολύονται τῆς κολάσεως* [. . .]. *καὶ ὅτι* [. . .] *οὐδεὶς ἀπολύεται τῆς κολάσεως*.

[212] On the sixth-century Origenist controversy, see Binns (1994) 201–17. Origen's theology had generated heated debate already in the fifth century: Clark (1992). For Origen's views proper, see Daley (1991) 56–9, with notes; Pelikan (1961) 79–97. Origen probably inherited these views from Clement of Alexandria: Daley (1991) 46–7.

553,[213] Gobar went on to undermine the orthodox position by adding in his following Chapter 1.15 that '[t]o be burned and not consumed is an indestructible self-destruction', and cited Titus of Bostra as authority for the impossibility of this oxymoron: 'How can destruction be destruction of itself? For it destroys solely and alone something else, not itself. But if it destroyed itself, it could not have subsisted from the start; for if it will destroy itself, and it will not so much "be" as "destroy" itself, for an indestructible destruction is by common sense, an impossible conception'.[214] To Gobar, burning implied consumption, and consumption necessarily came to an end. For reprobate souls to burn eternally without ever being consumed was strictly speaking impossible. Origen's view, therefore, stood vindicated.

Further evidence for a rationalist critique of orthodoxy at Rome comparable to contemporary debate at Constantinople can also be found in the questions regarding hell's eternity in Gregory's fourth dialogue. Chapter forty-six records this exchange between Gregory and Deacon Peter:

> P: Surely we do not hold that those who are once plunged into hell will burn for ever?
>
> G: We most certainly do! And that truth stands solid and unshaken. Just as the joys of heaven will never cease, so too there is no end to the torments of the damned. [. . .]
>
> P: What if someone should say: God has merely threatened sinners with eternal punishment to keep them from committing sins?
>
> G: If He makes use of empty threats to keep us from injustice, then the promises he makes to lead us to justice are likewise worthless. [. . .] no one in his right mind would entertain such a thought. If God threatened us without ever intending to fulfil his threat, we should have to call him deceitful instead of merciful. And that would be sacrilegious.

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[213] See the excellent discussion in Price (2009) II, 270–80.

[214] Stephen Gobar §15 = Photius, *Bibliotheca*, cod. 232 in Harnack (1923) 209 = *Photius*, Henry (ed.), vol. 5, 70–1: *Ὅτι τὸ καίεσθαι καὶ μὴ κατακαίεσθαι φθοράν ἐστιν ἄφθαρτον φθείρεσθαι. Τῖτος δὲ ὁ ἐπίσκοπος Βόστρων, κατὰ Μανιχαίων γράφων* [. . .] *φησί· "Πῶς ἂν εἴη φθορὰ ἑαυτῆς ἡ φθορὰ; Πάντως γὰρ ἕτερόν τι φθείρει, οὐχ ἑαυτήν. Εἰ δὲ ἑαυτὴν ἔφθειρεν, οὐδὲ τὴν ἀρχὴν ἂν ὑπέστη· φθαρήσεται γὰρ ἑαυτὴν μᾶλλον φθείρουσα ἢ οὖσα· φθορὰν γὰρ ἄφθαρτον ἀδύνατον κατά γε τὰς κοινὰς ἐννοίας ἐπινοηθῆναι ποτε".*

> P: I should like to know whether it is just to inflict an everlasting punishment for a fault which is finite. [. . .][215]

Like Gobar at Constantinople, the group that Deacon Peter represented at Rome also appears to have contested the orthodox view on the grounds of its incongruity with the notion of the soul's immortality. Peter stated: '[. . .] another question disturbs my mind. How can a soul be called immortal when, as a matter of fact, it dies in the eternal fire?'[216] Gregory's reply was traditional,[217] but that the objection was raised is significant.

Yet anxieties at Rome did not stop with the question of hell's duration or the immortality of the soul. Some in Gregory's circle also doubted the ability of an incorporeal substance like the soul to undergo destruction in a corporeal substance like the fire that was held to burn in hell. The following exchange recorded in the fourth dialogue seems immediately to bring us into the realm of concerns Gobar relished and to indicate how strongly this problem was felt at Rome:

> P: What reason have I to believe that a physical fire can attack an incorporeal substance?
>
> G: If the incorporeal spirit of a living man is held fast in the body, why should the incorporeal spirit after death not be held fast in corporeal fire?
>
> P: In a living person, the incorporeal spirit is held in the body because it imparts life to the body'.[218]

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[215] Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 4.46.1–3 (SC 265:160–2): P: *Numquidnam, quaeso te, dicimus eos, qui semel illic mersi fuerint, simper arsuros?* G: *Constat nimis et incunctanter uerum est quia, sicut finis non est gaudio bonorum, ita finis non erit tormenta malorum. [. . .]* P: *Quid, si quis dicat: "idcirco peccantibus aeternam poenam minatus est, ut eos a peccatorum perpetratione conpesceret"?* G: *Si falsum est quod minatus est, ut ab iniustitia corrigeret, etiam falsa est pollicitus, ut ad iustitiam prouocaret. Sed quis hoc dicere uel insanus praesumat? Et si minatus est quod non erat inpleturus, dum adserere eum misericordem uolumus, fallacem, quod dici nefas est, praedicare conpellimur.* P: *Scire uelim quomodo iustum sit ut culpa, quae cum fine perpetrata est, sine fine puniatur.*

[216] Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 4.47.1 (SC 265:166): *Sed haec nunc quaestio mentem mouet, quomodo anima inmortalis dicitur, dum constet quod in perpetuo igne moriatur.*

[217] See *Dial.* 4.47.2 (SC 265:166).

[218] Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 4.29.2–30.2(a) (SC 265:100): P: *Et qua ratione credendum est quia rem incorpoream tenere ignis corporeus possit?* G: *Si uiuentis hominis incorporeus spiritus tenetur in corpore, cur non post mortem, cum incorporeus sit spiritus, etiam corporeo igne teneatur?* P: *In uiuente quolibet idcirco incorporeus*

In reply, Gregory defended the full physicality of the punishment, the soul's incorporeality notwithstanding. He reproduced the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus (Lk. 16:19–31), where, in hell, the rich man begged Lazarus for a drop of water to cool his tongue. But the rationalists in Gregory's audience were not convinced and cited unrelieved doubts of a specifically 'rationalist' kind. 'The demands of reason and the authority of Scripture incline me to believe', Deacon Peter asserts. 'But left to itself, my mind stubbornly returns to the question, for how can an incorporeal substance be held and tortured by one that is corporeal? That is beyond my comprehension.'[219] In this setting, Gregory appealed to Revelation's prophecy of Satan's destruction:

> G: Tell me this, Peter. Do you think that the apostate spirits who were cast down from their heavenly glory were corporeal or incorporeal?
>
> P: Who in his right senses would say that a spirit is corporeal?
>
> G: Well then, would you say the fire of hell is incorporeal or corporeal?
>
> P: I am firmly convinced that the fire of hell is corporeal and that bodies are tortured in it.
>
> G: On the last day Christ will say to the wicked, 'Go far from me, you that are accursed, into that eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels'. If these incorporeal beings, the Devil and his angels, are going to be tortured by physical fire, is it incredible that souls should be able to suffer physical torments even before they are united with the body?[220]

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spiritus tenetur in corpore, quia uiuificat corpus. G: *Si incorporeus spiritus, Petre, in hoc teneri potest quod uiuificat, quare non poenaliter et ibi teneatur ubi mortificatur?*

[219] Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 4.30.4(a) (SC 265:102): *Ecce ratione ac testimonio ad crеduliatatem flectitur animus, sed dimissus iterum ad rigorem redit. Quomodo enim res incorporea a re corporea teneri atque adfligi possit ignoro*.

[220] Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 4.30.4(b)–5 (SC 265:102): G: *Dic, quaeso te, apostatas spiritus a caelesti gloria deiectos esse corporeos an incorporeos suspicaris? P: Quis sanum sapiens esse spiritus corporeos dixerit?* G: *Gehennae ignem esse incorporeum an corporeum fateris?* P: *Ignem gehennae corporeum esse non ambigo, in quo certum est corpora cruciari*. G: *Certe reprobis ueritas in fine dictura est: 'Ite in ignem aeternum, qui praeparatus est diabolo et angelis eius'. Si igitur diabolus eiusque angeli, cum sint incorporei, corporeo sunt igne cruciandi, quid mirum si animae, et antequam recipiant corpora, possint corporea sentire tormenta?*

In other words, Gregory argued that if Satan, being incorporeal, could suffer in hellfire, so could the human soul. But clearly, his audience found this difficult to accept.

In this light it is significant that, at Constantinople, the corporeality or incorporeality of spiritual beings was also contested. Two chapters from Gobar draw out the contradictory views that circulated in the intellectual circles of imperial capital at this time regarding the nature of spiritual beings and the consequences this implied for the church's view of their perishability:

(a) 1.24: The angels and the demons have bodies – Neither the former nor the latter have bodies.
(b) 1.25: Angels and rational souls and all intelligent creatures are by nature and in the order of nature imperishable – On the contrary, not by nature but by grace are the immortal; God alone is so by nature.[221]

Again, Gobar appears to have owed his interest in angelogy to Philoponus.[222] In his *On the Creation of the World* (557–60), Philoponus offered two long passages devoted to refuting the notion that angels were corporeal beings and to proving, conversely, that God created the angels as incorporeal beings *prior to* the creation of the visible world as described in Genesis. His target was, on the one hand, Theodore of Mopsuestia, who had expressed the opposite view. But the view that the angels were created at the same time as the creation of the rest of the corporeal universe had recently been expressed by Cosmas Indicopleustes, the extreme dyophysite (or 'Nestorian') who had himself called Philoponus a 'false Christian' in his own description of the world, or *Christian Topography* (*c.* 546–9).[223] That Gobar was aware of Philoponus's arguments there can be no doubt and the exchange Gregory records in the fourth dialogue between himself and Deacon Peter on this subject seems to feed directly out of this same debate.

In summing up his account of the *apocrisarius* Gregory's debate with Patriarch Eutychius, Yves-Marie Duval opined pessimistically that '[i]t is not surprising that Gregory did not resume such discussions at Rome. It was not for nothing that the discussion took place at Constantinople. Nothing demonstrates more clearly [. . .] the difference in intellectual atmosphere between [Rome and Constantinople], especially if we concede that Eutychius's treatise belonged to an intellectual foment, very distant from [Rome] attacked by the plague and Lombards.'[224] In the light of the evident impact which rationalist speculation at Constantinople exerted upon Gregory's circle at Rome, however, Duval's negative assessment cannot now be accepted as it stands. Indeed, others have commented positively before on the general health of the profane sciences in Italy at the end of the sixth century.[225] Thanks to the *Dialogues*, the most maligned of Gregory's works, we can appreciate just how far important elements of the lively intellectual atmosphere Gregory found at Constantinople clearly did follow the Roman *apocrisarius* home. But it is also conceivable that they were to be found there already in the lingering influence in the city of the great Boethius and his planned translations of the Aristotelian corpus, unfinished before his untimely death with the exception of the *Categories*.[226]

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[221] Stephen Gobar §24 and §25 = Photius, *Bibliotheca*, cod. 232 in Harnack (1923) 209: = *Photius*, Henry (ed.), vol. 5, 72–3: *Ὅτι οἵ ἄγγελοι καὶ οἵ δαίμονες σώματων ἤνωνται, καὶ ὅτι οὐδέτεροι αὐτῶν σώμασιν ἤνωνται. Ὅτι οἵ ἄγγελοι καὶ αἵ λογικαὶ ψυχαὶ καὶ πάντα τὰ νοερὰ κτίσματα φύσει καὶ κατὰ φύσιν εἰσὶν ἄφθαρτα· καὶ ἐκ τοῦ ἀντικειμένου, ὅτι οὐ φύσει ἀλλὰ χάριτι εἰσιν ἀθάνατοι, φύσει δὲ μόνος ὁ θεός.*

[222] This does not appear to have been noticed before: cf. Bardy (1947) 27–8.

[223] MacCoull (1995*b*) and (2006) 405.

To Harnack, in conclusion, Gobar was 'an Aristotelian [. . .] and the whole work [. . .] dwells in the cool, scientific atmosphere of Aristotle'.[227] Certainly, it was to the Stagirite and his works that Christians turned to make sense of the complex terminological and conceptual labyrinth of patristic Christology, even as they refuted his cosmology.[228] But Aristotelian psychology, in particular, confronted Christian readers in late antiquity with a distinctive, and potentially disturbing, teaching on the soul as the body's 'life principle' or 'form'. For Aristotle, even if it were a separate substance (which was not certain), the soul primarily existed to provide the body's physical matter with its various nutritive, sensory, and rational functions.

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[224] Duval (1986) 359.

[225] Riché (1962) 186–7: 'En effet, on ne peut expliquer l'œuvre de Grégoire le Grand dans un pays où toute culture intellectuelle profane aurait disparu.'

[226] Lang (2001) n. 57 suggests that in Rome before 524, Boethius may have been aware of Aristotle's *De Anima*: see his *Contra Eutychen et Nestorium* 111.31–3: 86. On Boethius and Aristotle's *Categories*, see Marenbon (2003) 75; Chadwick (1990) 198–201.

[227] Harnack (1923) 218. For Gobar's Aristotelianism, Harnack points to §§ 1, 15, 27, 37.

[228] See MacCoull (1995*a*) 49–52, 59; and Wildberg (2005) 335–6.

Through the soul's 'indissoluble admixture with the body', it could only be imagined with difficulty as existing apart from the body's physical matter. 'For it is by their partnership that the body acts and the soul is affected, that the body comes to be moved and the soul produces motion'.[229] The implications of such a doctrine for the ongoing activity of the disembodied human soul *post mortem* might have been clear enough. Indeed, given the Aristotelianism prevalent in numerous aspects of Gobar's thought, and not least his Tritheism, it is not impossible that familiarity with Aristotelian psychology led Gobar to revisit the theoretical grounds of Christian teaching on the afterlife. Aristotelianism promoted, moreover, the kind of empirical enquiry capable of undermining the claims of theologians and hagiographers alike, not least as an essential foundation for Galenic medicine.[230] In this sense, the ongoing vitality of philosophical studies in early Byzantium possibly stimulated and then abetted the criticism of the saints' cult in the capital, and perhaps elsewhere. Protected by the shadow of a lingering rationalism that turns upside-down conventional representations of early medieval intellectual culture, a vigorous competition of epistemologies flourished throughout the early Byzantine Mediterranean, 'a fluid and contested world of cultural diglossia'.[231] Scorned by the *Dialogues*' detractors as 'sensation-seeking yarns', Gregory's narratives in the fourth dialogue were not gratuitous, but addressed, as in the second dialogue, a web of contemporaneously contested issues.[232] Mistaken as 'manifestations of a credulous age', the *Dialogues* reflect not so much universal Roman consensus regarding the saints' miracles and visions, but a degree of doubt and scepticism that can be corroborated across the early Byzantine Mediterranean.

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[229] Aristotle, *De Anima*, 1.4.407b = *Aristotle: De Anima (On the Soul)*, H. Tancred-Lawson (trans.) (London, 1986), 142. For commentary see Everson (1995), 170, 181; and Sorabji (1974) 42–64.

[230] On doctors as competitors to the saints, see Dagron (1981*a*). On the competition between Christian and Aristotelian explanatory systems in early Byzantium, see Dagron (1981*b*) esp. 87.

[231] MacCoull (2007) 78, writing specifically about sixth-century Egypt.

[232] Compare, for example, Kelly (1996) 67: 'His *Dialogues* [. . .] reflect the simple credulity of the age'.

3

Contesting the saints' miracles

The witness of early Byzantine Lives and miracle collections

> *No one seeing or hearing something in monastic life that has a force over and beyond nature should, out of ignorance, become unbelieving. For much that is supernatural happens where the supernatural God abides.*
>
> *Who in the outside world has worked wonders, raised the dead, expelled demons? No one. Such deeds are done by monks. It is their reward. People in secular life cannot do these things, for if they could, what then would be the point of ascetic practice and the solitary life?*
>
> John Climacus, *Ladder of Divine Assent*, 26, 1013b (trans. 229) and 2, 657b (trans. 83)[1]

Only months before the violent overthrow of Emperor Maurice and his government in November 602, Eustratius of Constantinople completed the composition of his final surviving work, *The Life and Passion of Golinduch*.[2] Having recounted the holy woman's persecution at the hands of the Persians, her flight to the Roman empire, and the goodwill she bore towards the emperor and the ruling city at Constantinople, Eustratius went on to relate the manner of her death. Eustratius described how, fulfilling a final prayer of praise and thanksgiving, Golinduch 'sought out the freespoken angelic choirs in heaven, by whom she was received with great rejoicing.'[3] Thereupon, Golinduch 'surrendered her soul to the holy angels who led her, not unwillingly, to the heavenly apartments and mansions and her spirit was placed into the hands of God.'[4] Despite her removal from the land of the living, Golinduch remained in Eustratius's eyes a special patroness of Maurice and his government in heaven. 'You O honoured and holy martyr of Christ', he prayed, 'who also, *with the ranks of the angels and the souls of the righteous*, ceaselessly praise the holy, life-giving and single-substanced Trinity, now intercede also with our holy and glorious Lady, Mary, the ever-virgin Mother of God, for the sake of our most pious and Christ-loving emperors and for our most faithful and most Christian government [. . .]'.[5] Eustratius envisaged that Golinduch would continue in her active patronage of the empire from heaven with the angelic host and the souls of the saints, undiminished by the dissolution of her physical body and her departure beyond the grave, a powerful patroness of the emperor and his dynasty.[6]

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[1] Cited in Hatlie (2008) 250, n. 165.

[2] The text can be found in A. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, *Ἀνάλεκτα Ἱεροσολυμιτικῆς Σταχυολογίας* 4. 149–74 (St Petersburg, 1897) and 5.395–6 (St Petersburg, 1898). See Peeters (1944), Garitte (1956) and Laga (1958). On Phocas's seizure of power, see Whitby (1988) 24–7.

So much does Eustratius's description of the ongoing activity of Golinduch's soul *post mortem* seem to reiterate his earlier treatise on the saints that behind the priest's prayer for the martyr's posthumous intercessions on behalf of the empire there seems to have stood an ongoing polemical objective: namely, to defend the Christian saints' cult against its detractors even on the threshold of the empire's tumultuous seventh century.[7] 'Do you not see that God, having been entreated by his servants, averts the just threats that assail us?' affirmed Eustratius in his earlier rebuttal of rationalist opposition to the saints' cult. 'But whether the saints who intercede are active or not, judge for yourselves: intercession is not [a property] of the sleeping dead, but of the living and subsisting and active.'[8]

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[3] Eustratius of Constantinople, *V. Gol.* 25 = Papadopoulos-Kerameus, *Ἀνάλεκτα*, 4.172: *Πληρώσασα γοῦν καὶ ταύτην τὴν εὐχαριστήριον δοξολογίαν, τὰς ἐν οὐρανῷ καὶ ἀγγελικὰς μετὰ παρρησίας ἐζήτει χοροστασίας, ὑφ' ὧν καὶ μετὰ πολλῆς ἀπεδέχθη χαρᾶς.*

[4] Eustratius of Constantinople, *V. Gol.* 25 = Papadopoulos-Kerameus, *Ἀνάλεκτα*, 4.173: *Ἡ δὲ τοῖς ἀπάγουσιν αὐτὴν ἀγγέλοις ἁγίοις εἰς τὰς οὐρανίους μονάς τε καὶ λήξεις οὐκ ἀηδῶς ἐναποψύξασα, εἰς χεῖρας τοῦ Θεοῦ τὸ πνεῦμα αὐτῆς παρέθετο.*

[5] Eustratius of Constantinople, *V. Gol.* 25 = Papadopoulos-Kerameus, *Ἀνάλεκτα*, 4.173: *ὦ τιμία καὶ ἁγία τοῦ Χριστοῦ μάρτυς, καὶ ἀπαύστως μετὰ ἀγγελικῶν τάξεων καὶ καὶ τῶν δικαίων ψυχῶν δοξολουγοῦσα τὴν ἁγίαν καὶ ζωοποιὸν καὶ ὁμοούσιον καὶ ἀΐδιον τριάδα, πρέσβευε καὶ νῦν σὺν τῇ ἁγίᾳ καὶ ἐνδόξῳ δεσποίνῃ ἡμῶν θεοτόκῳ καὶ ἀειπαρθένῳ Μαρίᾳ ὑπὲρ τῶν εὐσεβεστάτων καὶ φιλοχρίστων βασιλέων καὶ τοῦ πιστοτάτου καὶ χριστιανικωτάτου ἡμῶν πολιτεύματος.*

[6] Of course, it was not to be. On Phocas's seizure of government, see Whitby (1988) 24–7; and for a re-assessment of his reign, Olster (1993) 1–21.

[7] Dal Santo (2011*b*).

The previous chapters of this study have argued that Pope Gregory the Great's *Dialogues on the Miracles of the Italian Fathers* and Presbyter Eustratius of Constantinople's *On the State of Souls after Death* represent near contemporaneous apologies for the cult of the saints in early Byzantium. This has demonstrated the importance of considering Gregory's hagiography in the context of the broader early Byzantine world. But how widespread was questioning of the saints at this time? The present chapter will contend that Eustratius and Gregory's apologies for the saints' miracles and their ongoing activity *post mortem* were reflected in a range of hagiographical sources from the turn of sixth and seventh centuries. It argues that during the approximate half-century between *circa* 575 and *circa* 625 the East Roman world played host to a wide-ranging debate about the cult of the saints, with the sources frequently expressing anxiety about the cult's propriety and the plausibility of the miracles claimed in favour of its holy subjects.

Of course, normal caution is necessary in handling the sources at our disposal. We cannot assume, for example, that the audience of the Life of an ascetic holy man produced in an Anatolian monastery was the same as that addressed by a collection of miracles from an urban shrine in the empire's capital, nor that their anxieties in respect of the saints' miracles (if they entertained any at all) were contiguous. But although the picture that emerges in this chapter will be inescapably incomplete, it is clear that hagiographical sources from this period consistently presented the Christian saints' cult as commanding less of a consensus in East Roman society than is often acknowledged in modern, English-speaking historiography.[9] Indeed, this chapter proceeds from the basic historicist assumption that, in any society, no text is produced in a vacuum, but stands, almost inevitably, in an implicit dialogue with other literary products from its own immediate historical past and present, a dialogue that is socially meaningful both to its author and its audience.[10] That is to say, texts participate in a real social debate. This might be either more or less so in a pre-modern society like Byzantium where limited literacy restricted direct access to the written word to the secular and clerical elite—and it is doubtless the conerns of this numerically small, but culturally powerful, tranche of East Roman society that will be reflected, by and large, in the account that follows.[11] But as we shall see, there remain good reasons for believing that some of their anxieties in respect of the saints occasionally reached further down the social scale.

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[8] Eustratius of Constantinople, *De stat. anim.* = CCG 60: 344–7: *Ὁρᾷς ὅτι δυσωπούμενος ὑπὸ τῶν δούλων αὐτοῦ ὁ θεὸς παράγει δικαίαν ἀπειλὴν κινουμένην καθ' ἡμῶν; Ἆρα οὖν οἱ ἅγιοι πρεσβεύοντες ἐνεργοῦσιν ἢ οὐκ ἐνεργοῦσιν, κρίνατε ὑμεῖς: ἡ πρεσβεία οὐκ ἔστιν κοιμωμένων νεκρῶν, ἀλλὰ ζώντων, καὶ ὑφεστώτων καὶ ἐνεργούντων.*

[9] We shall frequently return to the important studies of Dagron (1992), Auzépy (1995), and Déroche (2000) in French. See also the pioneering study of Patlagean (1968), which deals with many of the Lives discussed here.

This chapter therefore highlights the expressions of unease towards the Christian cult of the saints found in a range of late sixth- and early seventh-century hagiography. It seeks to demonstrate thereby that the apologies for the saints and their miracles visible in Eustratius's *On the State of Souls after Death* and Gregory the Great's *Dialogues on the Miracles of the Italian Fathers* were not merely isolated or idiosyncratic statements, but represented convergent attempts to respond to a widespread sense of anxiety about the plausibility of stories involving the saints' miracles, and, indeed, the legitimacy and propriety of their cult more generally. Some of the evidence presented here corroborates a number of the tensions that we have already observed, especially the question of whether a saint's miracles were in fact personally performed by the saint in question. But viewed from the larger perspective of the society that produced and read these texts, they point towards a more generalized 'scepticism'—or unwillingness to believe without good reason—in claims of saintly thaumaturgy, and implicitly to the exercise of critical faculties by early Byzantine people when confronted with hagiographers' reports of a saint's supposed miracles, whether from beyond the grave or while still in the flesh. This is not necessarily to contest either the deep physical entrenchment of the saints' cult in early Byzantine society or its fundamental 'popularity', which the archaeological evidence amply displays through a range of material, including the abundant

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[10] See esp. Halliday and Hasan (1985) 11.

[11] The prosopographical details that link many of the authors whose works will be discussed in this chapter, suggest that the elite that discussed and wrote about the saints' miracles in early Byzantium occasionally was very restricted indeed.

eulogiai or pilgrims' tokens that have survived from the period.[12] But it certainly puts both into perspective and serves to demonstrate how far these two 'modes of response'—the one pious, the other more criticial—existed alongside each other in early Byzantine society. Even on the eve of the Arab invasions of the 630s the saints' authority was not entirely secured.

The texts under consideration are presented as a representative rather than exhaustive selection of early Byzantine hagiographical production between the reigns of the Emperors Justin II (565–78) and Heraclius (610–41).[13] All have their origins at Constantinople or other eastern centres. Among them are three important collections of the miracles of deceased saints.[14] The first, commonly dated to the later half of the sixth century, is the first four series of the anonymous *Miracles of Cosmas and Damian*, which narrated the miracles said to have been performed by those saints at their shrine at Constantinople.[15] The second is Sophronius of Jerusalem's *Miracles of Cyrus and John*, a record of the miracles reportedly performed by those saints at their shrine at Menouthis (Aboukir) in Egypt and composed during Sophronius's sojourn (in the company of John Moschus) at Alexandria between 608 and 614.[16] The third is Archbishop John of Thessalonica's *Miracles of Demetrius*, created at the beginning of Emperor Heraclius's (610–41) reign, but largely recounting the activity of the

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[12] Note especially the widespread pilgrims' *eulogiai* produced at the shrines of various saints. Often bearing an image of the saint in question, they allowed the saints' wonder-working presence to return home with their holder from the shrine. See above all Vikan (1982); Lambert and Pedemonte Demeglio (1994). For the impressive archaeological legacy of the saints' cult in Egypt, see Papaconstantinou (2001). For the empire more broadly, see Vikan (1982); Maraval (1985); and Krueger (2005).

[13] Notably, John Moschus's *Spiritual Meadow* and John of Ephesus's *Lives of the Eastern Saints* fall beyond the scope of this study. For a sophisticated reading of the former text, see now Booth (forthcoming). For the latter, see Ashbrook Harvey (1990).

[14] On the nature of these texts, see the fundamental early studies of Deubner (1900) and Delehaye (1925).

[15] The Greek text of *Cosmas and Damian* was established by L. Deubner, *Kosmas und Damian: Texte und Einleitung* (Leipzig, 1907) and a French translation of Deubner's text can be found in *Collections grecques de miracles: Sainte Thècle, Saints Côme et Damien, Saints Cyr et Jean (extraits), St Georges*, A.-J. Festugière (trans.) (Paris, 1971).

[16] See N. Fernandez-Marcos, *Los Thaumata de Sofronio: Contribucion al Estudio de la* Incubatio *Cristiana* (Madrid, 1975) with a French translation in *Sophrone de Jérusalem: Miracles des saints Cyr et Jean*, J. Gascou (trans.) (Paris, 2006). I also thank Phil Booth for sharing with me his personal translation of *Cyrus and John* into English.

(long deceased) saint in that city during the 580s and 590s.[17] To these three we add a fourth text, the *Life of St Symeon the Younger*, which, despite narrating the wonders of a living rather than a deceased saint, shares many of the characteristics of the other three.[18] Assembled during the reign of Phocas (602–10) by one of Symeon's disciples in the aftermath of the saint's death in 592, this *Life* recorded the various miracles which the pillar saint performed from his column on the Wondrous Mountain outside Antioch.[19]

A second range of sources is represented by two saints' Lives. The first of these is the *Life of Theodore of Sykeon*, written down by a disciple of Theodore's named George, some time *hegoumenos* of the monastery which the holy man founded, probably over an extended period running from Theodore's death in 613 down to the death of the Emperor Heraclius towards the middle of the seventh century.[20] The second is Leontius of Neapolis's *Life of John the Almsgiver*, composed, on Cyprus, in 641–2.[21] Both of these have been included because they recapitulate some of the themes on display in Eustratius and Gregory's texts as well as the miracles collections. Theodore of Sykeon was an Anatolian monk and sometime bishop of Anastasioupolis who took up temporary residence in Constantinople during the reign of Maurice (582–602), when the emperor invited Theodore to visit, and bless, the capital between 595 and 602.[22] For his part,

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[17] See P. Lemerle, *Les plus anciens recueils des miracles de saint Démétrius*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1979). Archbishop John was the successor of Eusebius in the see of Thessalonica, an occasional correspondent of Gregory's during the 590s as papal vicar in Greece. See Gregory the Great, *Epp*. 9.157; 9. 197; 11.55; cf. 5.63; 6.7; also Delogu (2000) 199–200.

[18] Déroche (2000) 145 n. 2.

[19] See P. van den Ven, *Vie ancienne de S. Syméon Stylite le Jeune (521–592): traduction et texte grec*, 2 vols. (Brussels, 1962–70). On the composition of the Life, see Déroche (1996) 68–70.

[20] For the Greek text with French translation, see A.-J Festugière, *Vie de Théodore de Sykéôn* (Brussels, 1970). An abridged English version can be found in E. Dawes and N. H. Baynes, *Three Byzantine Saints* (Oxford, 1948). For thoughts on the date of the text, see Mitchell (1993), II, 123; cf. van Ginkel (2002). Howard-Johnston notes that one of Theodore's alleged prophecies 'surely benefits from his biographer's hindsight in 641 or later': Howard-Johnston (2010) 149 n. 41.

[21] For the Greek text with French translation, see A. J. Festugière and L. Rydén, *Léontios de Néapolis: Vie de Syméon le Fou, Vie de Jean de Chypre* (Paris, 1974). An abridged English version can be found in Dawes and Baynes, *Byzantine Saints*. On the date of this text, see Mango (1984) 33.

[22] Important discussions of Theodore can be found in Cormack (1985) 9–49 and Mitchell (1993), II, 122–50. But see also Hatlie (2008) 194–7; Rapp (2005) 160–6;

John of Alexandria succeeded Eulogius, Gregory's close correspondent, as Patriarch of the great Egyptian city from 610 to 619. He was also Sophronius's sponsor in Egypt before the latter travelled on with Moschus to North Africa and, eventually, Rome, where they apparently formed a close bond with the surviving members of Gregory's circle.[23] Sophronius and Moschus composed the first (no longer extant) *Life of John the Almsgiver*, which Leontius used as the basis of his Life.[24] As we shall see, it is possible to identify one instance, in particular, where a story that had its origins in Gregory's Rome apparently made its way, along this circuitous route, into Leontius's text. Shorter references will also be made to the *Miracles of Anastasius the Persian*, a miracle collection produced at the 'Tetrapylon' shrine of the saint at Caesarea in Palestine between 630 and the early 640s (and later incorporated at Constantinople into a greater corpus commemorating the works of that saint),[25] and to the anonymous *Miracles of Artemius*, dating from the decade between 658 and 668 and again from Constantinople.[26] Although the latter text falls, strictly speaking, outside the chronological boundaries of this chapter (*c.* 575–625), its value lies in demonstrating, with Anastasius of Sinai's *Questions and Answers* (c. 680) and the late seventh- or early eighth-century *Miracles of Therapon*, how far unanswered questions about the saints' cult persisted on the eve of the iconoclastic period.[27]

As we shall see, hagiographers from the later sixth and early seventh centuries were often at pains to prove the reality of the saints' miracles which they narrated and, in the case of deceased saints, the

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Horden (1982); and Browning (1981). For his visit to Constantinople under Maurice, see *Life of Theodore of Sykeon*, c. 82 in *La Vie de Théodore de Sykéon*, Festugière, 69 = Dawes and Baynes, *Three Byzantine Saints*, 145; and Michael Whitby (1988) 22–3. He returned on two further occasions: Mitchell (1993), II, 123.

[23] See Chadwick (1974) and Thacker (1998).

[24] See Mango (1984) 33–4. Although the complete text does not survive, the first part of Moschus and Sophronius's *Life of John* seems to have been preserved in the work of a later metaphrast. See Rydén and Festugière, *Léontios*, 321–9.

[25] See B. Flusin, *Saint Anastase le Perse et l'Histoire de la Palestine au début du VIIe siècle*, two vols. (Paris, 1992).

[26] The Greek with facing English translation is available in *The Miracles of St Artemius: A collection of miracle stories by an anonymous author of seventh-century Byzantium*, V. S. Crisafulli and J. W. Nesbitt (eds.) (Leiden, 1997).

[27] On *Therapon*, see Haldon (2007) 275–7 who recognizes the text's links with this earlier debate. How far these anxieties about the saints' cult flowed into 'iconoclasm' is a debated point that falls, strictly speaking, beyond the scope of this study. See, however, Wortley (1982).

benefits that their sainted subjects' intercession bestowed on those who sought their favours.[28] They insistently represented the saints as personal thaumaturgical agents in their own right, active 'in their own substance' (to apply Eustratius's term), whose miracles should truly be considered 'their own' (to borrow from Gregory). As if rebutting the same critics as Eustratius, contemporary miracle collections continually affirmed that apparitions of the saints were real and not an illusion (*φαντασία*), even when such apparitions occurred, as they mostly did, while their beholder was asleep. This was in conformity with the ancient practice of incubatory healing that was increasingly taken over by the church in various locations (largely if not exclusively in the east) from the second half of the fifth century, but which came into its own as a widespread form of 'Christian' therapy only during the sixth (although even then questions remained).[29] Indeed, it would be possible to interpret the debate about the saints' miracles that we see in texts from the end of the sixth and the beginning of the seventh centuries as a direct reflection of persistent anxieties about the propriety and efficacy of incubatory healing among Christians in a setting where its polytheistic antecedents had not been forgotten.[30]

Thematically, therefore, this chapter will engage with several ideas that run like a thread through a significant selection of contemporary hagiographical literature, both Lives and miracle collections. The first involves hagiographers' attempts to 'prove' the ongoing activity of the saints' souls *post mortem* by emphasizing the saints' subjective responsibility for their miracles, especially against allegations that these were performed by God or angels. As we have seen, one of his opponents' claims that Eustratius vigorously rejected was the notion that God or the angels assumed the saints' likenesses while the souls of the saints themselves, having been reduced to a state of inactivity following their separation from the body, 'slept'. As his description of the angels' escorting Golinduch's soul to heaven makes clear, Eustratius himself did not present the saints as operating in a competitive, but a complementary way with the angels. Nevertheless, it is significant that many stories found in contemporary hagiography also appear to have been aimed at distinguishing the saints' operations from those of God or the angels as clearly as possible, removing all doubt that it was not the latter particularly (and through them God) that had really performed the miracle being acclaimed. Simultaneously, the miracle collections display a marked concern to ward against any idea that the veneration of the saints was theologically objectionable by detracting from the worship of God, constantly negotiating, like Eustratius and Gregory, the difficult terrain between upholding the saints' personal responsibility for their miracles (and thus the value of their cult), and pre-empting possible charges of 'hagiolatry' by demonstrating the ultimate origins of the saints' miraculous powers in God.[31] Finally, we shall draw attention to a general attitude of 'scepticism' (that is, a reluctance to believe without convincing proof) on the part of audiences towards reports of the saints' miracles more generally, one which contested the role of divine Providence in human history upon which these relied, and which is especially interesting from the point of view of a rationalist or materialist perspective of the kind we have observed whether in Eustratius's *On the State of Souls* or Gregory the Great's fourth dialogue.

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[28] See also Auzépy (1995) 36: 'même au moment où ils s'imposent, les *Miracula* ne sont pas des textes assurés de la légitimité du culte qu'ils soutiennent, puisque leurs auteurs [. . .] se sentent obligés de justifier les miracles du saint et de les défendre contre ceux qu'ils appellent les "incrédules".'

[29] On incubation, see Dagron (1978) 101–8; Maraval (1985) 224–9; Parmentier (1988) and Sansterre (1991). The later fifth-century *Miracles of Thecla* anticipated some of these tensions. See Davis (2001) 79–80.

[30] See, for example, *CosDam* 9 where the activities of Cosmas and Damian were confused with those of Castor and Pollux. On the pagan antecedents for Christian incubation, see Deubner (1900) 1–55; Sansterre (1991); and Elsner (2007).

Many of the themes dealt with in the hagiography from the turn of the sixth and seventh centuries, and especially the desire to uphold the integrity of the saints as thaumaturgical agents working in co-operation with God and to shore up the plausibility of their benefactions, bear close comparison to the anxieties that Eustratius and Gregory addressed. Nevertheless, we should not push the comparison between the debate visible in Eustratius (and Gregory) and the tensions found in the early Byzantine Lives and miracle collections too far, as it would be possible to argue that these various texts reflect a common body of disquiet about the saints' increasingly prominent role in East Roman society from the end of the sixth century (especially through the practice of incubation), and that the tensions and contradictions which this chapter reveals in early Byzantine hagiography were, in a sense, germane to the enterprise itself.[32] In this sense, viewing Constantinople as the 'epicentre' of a discrete debate about the saints that was then exported to other centres is only one means (and not necessarily the most convincing) for representing the nature of the material. But there is perhaps something to be said for it and the spread of the debate about the saints from there as far afield as Merovingian Gaul (where in Bishop Gregory of Tours the miracles performed by a number of saints found a diligent recorder) should not be ruled out *a priori*, although these texts fall outside the bounds of the present study.[33] As Gregory's Latin *Dialogues* from Rome have shown, there was clearly little impediment to ideas moving fast across sizeable distances, despite difficult terrain and—crucially—, ostensibly insuperable linguistic 'barriers'.[34] Significantly, Gregory of Tours was among the earliest hagiographers to reproduce a distinctive trope of later Byzantine, iconophile literature, the bleeding icon.[35] But Gregory also reported that, during Lent 590, he defended the reality of life beyond the grave against the materiaist arguments of a renegade priest.[36] Although this debate seemed to focus more properly on the possibility of bodily resurrection than that at Constantinople, the Gallic bishop nonetheless cited many of the same biblical authorities (Gen 4.10, 25.8, Lk 16.45) as Eustratius.

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[31] See esp. Déroche (2000) 150–1, 153–5 and (1993) 109.

[32] Déroche (2000) 164–5.

Be that as it may, the discussion here will be restricted largely to the east and to texts composed in Greek. Arguing from these miracle collections, Vincent Déroche has recently challenged the dominant paradigm for representing the saints' social function as communal patrons and sponsors of social harmony. He notes that the *critics* of the saints played—through the effort hagiographers expended on rebutting them—a significant role in shaping the place of the saints' cult in contemporary society.[37] '[W]e must reverse', Déroche affirms, 'the perspective that the collections wish to impose and read, against the grain of the emphatic demonstrations of the saint's power, the difficulties that the author encountered in attempting to persuade his readers of them.'[38] Gilbert Dagron has made a similar point.[39] Indeed, the cumulative evidence presented by these texts for significant hesitation on the part of people from all sections of society (metropolitan and provincial) during the last quarter of the sixth and the first quarter of the seventh centuries suggests that the very consensus of belief on which many models of religion in this period have rested needs reassessment. It no longer seems correct to write about early Byzantine Christianity as a socially homogeneous religious phenomenon, or to portray the Christianization of the Roman world as if the process were complete by the time of the Arab conquests. Contemporary sources almost always suggest that a more diverse background—a society of much greater intellectual and religious plurality—stood behind the 'totalizing discourse' which the texts themselves sought to impose.[40]

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[33] See Van Dam (1993) 50–81; and Brown (1977).

[34] For example, the *Miracles of Artemius* reports patients travelling back to Byzantine Africa and Merovingian Gaul, successfully healed at the saint's shrine in Constantinople: *Art.* 4; 27; 44. See further Rapp (2004).

[35] See Cameron (1975), with Markus (1978). On the contested presence of incubation in Gaul, see Delehaye (1925) 73–85, 305–24; Brown (1976), repr. in idem (1982) 188; Parmentier (1988) 33–5. Cf. Le Goff (1985) 207–8.

[36] Gregory of Tours, *Libri Historiarum X*, 10.13, in Monumenta Germaniae Historica, SS rer. Merov. 1, 1, 496 = L. Thorpe, *History of the Franks* (London, 1974), p. 561. See also Van Dam (1993) 109–11.

[37] Déroche (2000) 149, where he cites an example from *Artemius*. See also Déroche (1993) and Haldon (1997*a*) 54.

THE MIRACLES OF COSMAS AND DAMIAN

Among the most striking of these sources is *The Miracles of Cosmas and Damian*, which, in its Greek form, consists of a collection of at least six discrete series of miracle stories deriving from the saints' shrine at Constantinople, otherwise known as the 'Cosmidion'. This building stood adjacent to the Church of the Virgin in Blachernae towards the northern end of the Theodosian Wall and the saints' foundation in the capital probably owed its construction, *circa* 480, to Paulina, mother of the usurper Leontius (484–8).[41] At least four of the six series of miracles belong to the period between this shrine's establishment and its destruction during the Avar siege of 626.[42] Syrian in origin, the cult of these two 'medical' saints spread rapidly throughout the empire from the later fifth century.[43] At Constantinople, Cosmas and Damian were patronized by the Emperors Justinian (537–65) and Justin II (565–78), who enlarged and beautified the Cosmidion. Indeed, it has been argued that Cosmas and Damian were consciously transformed by these emperors into an imperially sponsored cult.[44] Accounts of the miracles which the saints performed at this shrine spread widely, and at least two of the tales contained in the corpus were known to Sophronius when he composed his *Miracles of Cyrus and John* in Alexandria *circa* 610–14.[45] Although a precise dating is difficult, the scholarly consensus is that the surviving four series of early miracles are a product of the sixth century, and probably the second half of that century.[46] As we shall see, at least one of these authors rebutted allegations that the saints' apparitions were in fact 'illusions' in a way that strongly recalls Eustratius of Constantinople's apology for the saints, *On the State of Souls after Death*, composed, as we have seen between 582 and 602.

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[38] Déroche (2000) 150: 'il nous faut renverser la perspective que veulent imposer les recueils, et lire à travers les démonstrations emphatiques des pouvoirs du saint les difficultés que l'auteur rencontre pour en persuader ses lecteurs'.

[39] Dagron (1992) and (1993).

[40] See Cameron (1991*a*) 220–1.

[41] Mango (1994).

[42] See Talbot (2004) 228.

Although the texts themselves provide little guidance on the matter, those who composed the four collections of miracle stories to be discussed here were probably clerics in the employ of the Cosmidion itself. Such a position would explain their dogged commitment to demonstrating, by every means possible, the frequency and therapeutic efficacy of Cosmas and Damian apparitions at the shrine. The miracle stories they composed, apparently on the basis of the testimony of those whom the saints had healed, contain many interjections and exhortations by the authors to their audience; indeed, the stories were probably read aloud to gatherings of hopeful visitors to the shrine during all-night vigils and in this sense helped to form pilgrims' expectations concerning the nature of the saints' visitations.

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[43] See van Esbroeck (1981); and Wittman (1967) 54–8; and Perraymond (1998).

[44] Booth (2011).

[45] That is, Miracle Two, found in the first series of miracles, and Miracle Twenty-Four, found in the third: Festugière, *Collections*, 85–6. See also Delehaye (1925) 28 and Gascou, *Sophrone*, 11.

[46] See Delehaye (1925) 10; Festugière, *Collections*, 88; and Booth (2011). According to Procopius of Caesarea, Justinian himself had been the recipient of an apparition of the saints, when they 'saved him unexpectedly and contrary to all human reason' during a period of illness: Procopius, *Buildings*, I.6.5–8. No record of this miracle can be found in the surviving four series of early miracles. While it could certainly be argued that this points in favour of their composition before any healing of Justinian had taken place, the animosity that widely accrued to Justinian's memory would have recommended the suppression of any story involving the hated emperor.

But their stories also circulated in written form as the witness of Sophronius and an apparently competing miaphysite version of the collection demonstrate.[47] According to their hagiographers, Cosmas and Damian performed their miracles through a visitation to a supplicant at their shrine, which was usually effected through a dream or an apparition in a manner that broadly recalled the practices of pre-Christian incubation cults, such as that of Asclepius.[48] Also known as the ἀναργύρες (lit. 'those who take no money'), Cosmas and Damian proceeded in the majority of cases to prescribe a course of therapeutic action or the ingestion of some sort of curative substance.[49] Both were often far removed from normal Hippocratic methods.[50] But even while apologizing for the saints' unconventional therapies, the various authors of *Cosmas and Damian* remained sensitive to questions of agency, that is to say, whether it was to the saints themselves that their miracles could be ascribed.

What distinguishes *Cosmas and Damian* is its various authors' apparent awareness of many of the arguments which Eustratius rebutted in *On the State of Souls*. We have already observed how Eustratius defended the idea that the saints' souls were active *post mortem* 'not in imagination, but authentically (οὐ φαντασιωδῶς, ἀλλ' ἀληθῶς)'.[51] It is significant, then, that as a collection *Cosmas and Damian* often rebutted the notion that the saints' appearances were mere illusions. Thus, in Miracle Three, the unlikely remedy ordered by the saints was perceived as a source of relief by its author: it was so bizarre that 'their apparition (παράστασις) could not be considered to have been an illusion (φαντασία).'[52]

But it was the author of the collection's second series of miracles (viz., Miracles Eleven to Nineteen) that insisted most strongly upn the (physically) real rather than illusory character of the saints' apparitions and most consistently sought to underline the reality of the saints' personal agency in their healings.[53] For this author, παρουσία ('presence'), παράστασις ('manifestation'), περιοδία ('visitation'), or similar terms denoted the apparitions of the saints correctly understood as manifestations or visitations of their personal presence.[54] Conversely, φαντασία ('imagination', 'illusion') and ὀπτασία ('vision') stood for an apparition that was incorrectly understood to be less real, that is, a 'dream' or an 'illusion', in which the saints were not truly present. Thus, in Miracle Twelve, the author addressed what appears to have been a considerable degree of scepticism towards Cosmas and Damian's benefactions, one that has gone strangely unobserved in earlier studies.[55] The author's intention here was to prove that the saints' miracles constituted real, demonstrable 'facts'. He affirmed:

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[47] For this collection, see Rupprecht (1935). The problems it presents fall outside the scope of this study, but see esp. Booth (2011).

[48] See Csepregi (2002) 113–15; Delehaye (1925) 66; Deubner (1900) 75–6.

[49] On the question of remunerating the saints, see Déroche (2006).

[50] Delehaye (1925) 13–14. Cf. Déroche (1993) 102–3.

[51] See Eustratius of Constantinople, *Stat. anim.* = CCG 60:224–30.

[52] *CosDam* 3 in Deubner, *Kosmas*, 106 (Festugière, *Collections*, 103–4): ἵνα μὴ φαντασία νομισθείη αὐτῶν παρά στασις.

> And let nobody [. . .] throw into doubt or fail to believe any of the miracles or deeds of the saints (καὶ μηδείς [. . .] ἀμφιβάλῃ ἢ ἀπιστήσῃ πρὸς οὐδὲν τῶν θαυμάτων ἢ σχημάτων τῶν ἁγίων), neither let anyone cast the tale of their favours (that is, their healings) as if into a corner. For, Christ is my witness that no part of the truth has been tampered with in these things. On the contrary, I have put forth (however unworthily) only what I have heard from those who have been healed and what I have learnt from those who beheld other miracles with their own eyes. [. . .] For the saints provide their healing activity in many ways and in all places for those who approach them in faith. Listen, I say, and learn how I have deployed this prelude not at random but according to certain fact.[56]

Specifically, the author denied that the saints' visions were imaginary and he exhorted his audience in the following striking terms. 'Let nobody imagine', he wrote, 'that the apparition of the saints was a mere illusion, as do those who are completely mad' (*ἵνα δὲ μὴ φαντασίαν τὴν τῶν ἁγίων παράστασιν νομίσειέν τις, ὅπερ τῶν πάνυ λίαν ἀφρόνων*).[57] Clearly, this author's opinion was that apparitions of the saints actually took place in the saints' own substance and it was the saints themselves whom supplicants saw in their visions. What is, however, crucial is that this story presupposed the existence of a group of people who thought otherwise, for whom the saints' apparitions were, indeed, mere 'illusions'. Certainly, the notion that Eustratius's opponents advanced, whereby God or an angel assumed the saint's appearance in the visions supplicants received, was capable of being misrepresented in this way.

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[53] For the division of the corpus into its various series, see Festugière, *Collections*, 85–6.

[54] In Miracle Fifteen, as we have seen, the saints' intervention was described as a 'visitation' (ἐπιφοιτήσις).

[55] Wittmann (1967) 24: 'Die Mirakelberichte geben ein gutes Bild vom [. . .] grenzenlosen Vertrauen der Gläubigen in die Wunderkraft von Kosmas und Damian'; and Delehaye (1925) 65: 'Dans ce milieu grossier, le sens critique n'est éveillé à aucun degré, et le sens religieux comme le sens moral sont sensiblement au même niveau, d'une infériorité marquée.'

[56] *CosDam* 12 in Deubner, *Kosmas*, 132 (Festugière, *Collections*, 125): καὶ μηδείς [. . .] ἀμφιβάλῃ ἢ ἀπιστήσῃ πρὸς οὐδὲν τῶν θαυμάτων ἢ σχημάτων τῶν ἁγίων, μηδὲ ὡς ἐν παραβύστῳ τὴν τῶν χαρισμάτων αὐτῶν ἤγουν ἰάσεων διήγησιν λάβοι· ὡς ἐπὶ μάρτυρι γὰρ τῷ Χριστῷ οὐδὲν τῆς ἀληθείας ἐν τούτοις νενόθευται, ἀλλ' ὅσα παρά τε αὐτῶν τῶν ἰαθέντων ἀκήκοα καὶ τῶν παρακολουθησάντων αὐτοψὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις θαύμασιν ἔμαθον, ταῦτα εἰ καὶ κατ' αξίαν ἐνέθηκα. [. . .] τῇ γὰρ πίστει τῶν προστρέχοντων αὐτοῖς ἀκολουθοῦντες πολλὴν καὶ πανταχοῦ τὴν ἐνέργειαν τῆς θεραπείας παρέχουσιν. ἀκούσατε, παρακαλῶ, πῶς οὐκ εἰκῇ, ἀλλὰ μετὰ πράγματος τῷ προοιμίῳ τούτῳ ἐχρησάμην.

Indeed, the author continued to pursue this theme into the miracle narrative that followed. In this case, an officer devoted to Cosmas and Damian was stationed in Asia Minor, where his wife developed a jaw abscess. Despite the couple's distance from the shrine at Constantinople, the saints appeared to the woman in an apparition, thereby proving the author's earlier contention that the saints 'provide their healing activity in many ways and in all places for those who approach them in faith.'[58] When she described this vision, her husband produced the image of the saints he had in his bags. Seeing it, the woman immediately recognized the saints and identified them as the subjects of her vision. She venerated the saints' image (*προσεκύνησεν*), and the saints returned the following night and healed her. The pre-iconoclastic origin of this miracle narrative, too, has been doubted,[59] but the narrative's purpose is clearly to underline the concordant witness of form, apparition, and image:

> Waking, she questioned her spouse, desiring to find out from him the appearance [*σχήματα*] of the glorious saints, Cosmas and Damian, how they are described (*ἱστοροῦνται*) and in what arrangement (*ἐν ποίᾳ τάξει*) their apparitions [*παράστασις*] take place among the sick. When he described their appearance [*τὸ σχῆμα*] and narrated their favors in full, she agreed with her spouse in regard to their appearance [*τὰ σχήματα*] and told him everything else that was said to her by the saints in the vision [*ὀπτασίᾳ*].[60]

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[57] *CosDam* 12 in Deubner, *Kosmas*, 131 (Festugière, *Collections*, 124).

[58] See further Fernandez-Marcos, *Thaumata*, 78–80; Delehaye (1925) 16–17.

[59] See Brubaker (1998) 1219; Kitzinger (1954) 107 n. 89, 109 n. 98.

[60] *CosDam* 13 in Deubner, *Kosmas*, 133 (Festugière, *Collections*, 126): *ἢ δὲ διυπνισθεῖσα ἠρώτα τὸν ἴδιον ὁμόζυγον, πυθέσθαι παρ' αὐτοῦ βουλομένη τὰ σχήματα τῶν ἁγίων ἐνδόξων Κοσμᾶ καὶ Δαμιανοῦ, πῶς ἱστοροῦνται ἢ ἐν ποίᾳ τάξει ἡ αὐτῶν*

The story should be considered against the background provided by the contemporary debate about the activity, and visibility, of the disembodied human soul *post mortem*. That Cosmas and Damian's apparitions matched exactly an existing (presumably well-known) iconographical representation emerges here as proof of the ability of the saints' disembodied souls to appear to believers in a bodily form, in a city (Constantinople) where, as Eustratius's apology alerts us, this was known to be disputed. The author concluded, moreover, the narrative with the specific affirmation that 'the saints can be found wherever their supplicants call upon them in faith not only in activity, but in their very presence (*οὐ μόνον τῇ ἐνεργείᾳ, αλλὰ καὶ αὐτῇ τῇ παρουσίᾳ*).[61] Again, the reverse proposition, that is, that the saints' miracles were not performed in the saints' 'real presence', but only in appearance (if not 'activity'), seems compellingly close to the allegations that Eustratius rebutted at the end of the century.

Thus, that at least the second series of miracle stories contained in the *Cosmas and Damian* corpus seems to have addressed an ongoing debate about the saints' activities in Constantinople seems irresistible in view of the importance its author ascribed to establishing that the saints' apparitions and miracles were not 'illusions' but phenomena that truly involved the saints' subjective presence. The subject of Miracle Sixteen arguably embodied the prevailing scepticism. When the saints appeared to a sleeping woman and encouraged her to eat a cloth soaked in oil for the shrine's lamps, she did so and was healed. The following morning, however, the woman began 'to believe that the saints' visitation was only a dream or an illusion' (*ὀπτασίαν μέντοι μόνην ἤγουν φαντασίαν* [...] *νομίσασα τὴν τοιαύτην τῶν ἁγίων Κοσμᾶ καὶ Δαμιανοῦ περιοδίαν*), and that she only imagined having eaten the oily cloth. Her husband was not so easily swayed, however. He asked the woman from which lamp in her dream the saints had seemed to take the cloth. When they sought it out together, they discovered that its cloth actually was missing. Clearly, with such objective proof, there could be no doubt concerning the saints'

πρὸς τοὺς ἀσθενοῦντας γίνεται παράστασις. τοῦ δὲ ἀνδρὸς ἀπαγγείλαντος μὲν τὸ σχῆμα, διηγησαμένου δὲ καὶ τὰ αὐτῶν χαρίσματα, συνετίθετο μὲν τῷ συμβίῳ πρὸς τὰ σχήματα, ἔλεγεν δὲ αὐτῷ καὶ τὰ λοιπὰ τὰ ῥηθέντα αὐτῇ ἐν τῇ ὀπασίᾳ ὑπὸ τῶν ἁγίων. See also Mango (1986) 138–9.

[61] *CosDam* 13 in Deubner, *Kosmas*, 134 (Festugière, *Collections*, 127): *τῇ πίστει τῶν ἐπικαλουμένων αὐτοὺς οἱ πάνσοφοι οὗτοι ἅγιοι ἀκολουθοῦντες πανταχοῦ οὐ μόνον τῇ ἐνεργείᾳ, αλλὰ καὶ αὐτῇ τῇ παρουσίᾳ εὑρίσκονται.*

personal intervention. The author's gloss on the miracle rehearses the arguments we have already observed. 'Thus realizing what had happened, they were astonished that the saints had made the woman swallow the cloth from the lamp [. . .] not as if in a dream, but in truth' (*μὴ δι᾽ ὀπτασίας, αλλ᾽ αὐτῇ τῇ ἀληθείᾳ*).[62] Moreover, Miracle Eighteen recounted how a man, disappointed with the saints' failure to find him appropriate employment in the imperial city, denounced the saints as 'impostors' who 'did not possess the power to perform miracles' (*μηδεμίαν ἐνέργειαν εὐεργεσίας κεκτημένους*) and whose reputation for favour with God was 'a work of vain trickery' (*μάτην καὶ ἔκ τινος προλήψεως*).[63] Significantly, *ἐνέργεια* ('activity') was precisely what Eustratius's opponents alleged the saints did not possess in view of their disembodiment after death, their inactivity necessitating the assumption of their bodily appearance by God or angel in their apparitions.

The debate seems to have seeped into the third series of miracle narratives, too. In Miracle Twenty-Six, which belongs to the third series of miracle narratives (known also to Sophronius), the author narrated the arrival at the shrine of a 'heretical cleric' who was physically healthy and disbelieved in the saints' miracles.[64] The story hinged upon the production of empirical evidence as a prerequisite for the cleric's belief in the saints. Although the saints appeared to the sleeping heretic on three occasions, advising him of a remedy that would heal the sick woman who lay beside him at the shrine, the man was unmoved, 'doubting whether the saints had really appeared to him' (*ἀμφιβάλλοντος, εἴγε ἄρα οἱ ἅγιοι αὐτῷ ὤφθησαν*), for 'he had no proof of what the saints had told him' (*ἐκ τοῦ μὴ ἔχειν τῶν λεγομένων ἀπόδειξιν*).[65] But Cosmas and Damian found a way to cure the man's doubts and, in a final apparition, informed him that at the foot of his sick neighbour's bed lay an object prepared by the saints themselves to cure her. When he told the woman about the apparition, she followed the saints' advice and found the object in question. The heretic's doubts vanished: 'from the outcome of this affair, he [the doubting heretic] obtained the guarantee of the power of the saints—for it is on the basis of proof, not hearsay alone, that heretics are accustomed to believe'.[66] To some extent, this invites a certain comparison with the repeated requests for 'empirical evidence' in support of the afterlife of the soul that we have observed in Gregory's fourth dialogue.[67] But what is most striking in this narrative is that it was not so much the cleric's heterodoxy as his doubts in respect of the activities of Cosmas and Damian that earned him the censure of the author of this tale; indeed, this doubt was the only 'illness' the cleric was healed of at the shrine as, notably, the saints did not succeed in converting him to orthodoxy.

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[62] *CosDam* 16 in Deubner, *Kosmas*, 141 (Festugière, *Collections*, 134): *τότε γνόντες ἐθαύμασαν τοὺς ἁγίους τοὺς μὴ δι᾽ ὀπτασίας, αλλ᾽ αὐτῇ τῇ ἀληθείᾳ [. . .] τὴν ἀπὸ τοῦ λύχνου στοῦππαν τῇ γυναικὶ ἀντικαταλλάξαντας.*

[63] *CosDam* 18 in Deubner, *Kosmas*, 145 (Festugière, *Collections*, 137): *ἐπιθέτας ἀποκαλων τοὺς ἁγίους καὶ μηδεμίαν ἐνέργειαν εὐεργεσίας κεκτημένους, ἀλλὰ μάτην καὶ ἔκ τινος προλήψεως τὴν δόξαν τοῦ δύνασθαι παρὰ θεῷ ἔχοντας.*

[64] See *CosDam* 26 in Deubner, *Kosmas*, 166 (Festugière, *Collections*, 161). On 'heresy' and the doctrinal affiliation of the collection, see Booth (2011), who discusses a miaphysite rendering of the collection.

[65] *CosDam* 26 in Deubner, *Kosmas*, 166 (Festugière, *Collections*, 161–2).

Indeed, the various authors of the *Miracles of Cosmas and Damian* appear to have been constrained to head off sceptical objections to tales of the saints' miracles almost at every turn. Out of a total of thirty-two miracles in the first four series of miracle narratives, at least twenty contained reference to some 'crisis of confidence' in the saints on the part of the protagonist involved in the story, or reflected the author's anxiety that his audience would react with scepticism to his tale. The reasons for such scruples were multiple and, to a large extent, common to all of the miracle collections we shall consider: revulsion at the particular form of the remedy commanded by the saints in an apparition;[68] extended delay in the hoped-for miracle;[69] the saints' failure to heal an illness completely (or their apparent exacerbation of a particular condition);[70] the reported healing of heretics, Jews, and pagans;[71] and the competing claims of 'conventional' (i.e. Hippocratic) doctors.[72] The narratives of *Cosmas and Damian* often conclude with an exhortation to his audience not to disbelieve in the miraculous powers of the saints by heeding the example of the reprimanded sceptic. It would be possible to cast this exchange between the author and his audience as no more than a literary trope, a conventional and accepted means for structuring a hagiographical narrative. But, as we shall see, contemporary hagiography appears to have been addressed to a real debate current across the early Byzantine Mediterranean concerning the authenticity of the saints' miracles and a relatively widespread contestation of hagiographers' claims, one which frequently appears to have stemmed from a surprisingly rationalist perspective.[73]

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[66] *CosDam* 26 in Deubner, *Kosmas*, 167 (Festugière, *Collections*, 162): *ἐκεῖνος τε τὸ πιστὸν τῶν ἁγίων ἐκ τῆς τοῦ πράγματος ἐκβάσεως ἐσχηκώς (δι' ἀποδείξεως γὰρ καὶ οὐ δι' ἀκοῆς πιστεύειν εἰώθασιν αἱρετικοί)* [. . .]. Providing empirically verifiable evidence for Cosmas and Damian's miracles was a priority for the various authors of the collection, and the saints' miracles were consistently described as leaving behind physical marks (e.g. incisions, a healed wound) or other objects that corroborated the author's claim that the saints' apparitions could not be considered merely as illusions: compare Csepregi (2006) 100–1, 112.

[67] See Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 3.38.

[68] *CosDam* 3, 6, 16, 24.

[69] *CosDam* 1, 4, 5, 12, 18.

[70] *CosDam* 21, 31.

The clerical vocation of the authors of Cosmas and Damian's miracles would have connected them (and perhaps through them, members of their audience) to broader currents in the cultural and intellectual life of the imperial capital, even if only indirectly and by hearsay. These currents included contemporary criticism of the saints' miracles and Eustratius's defence of their authenticity. Like Eustratius and Gregory, the authors of the collection were keen to uphold the distinct role of both God and the saints in the saints' miracles. A story that narrated the saints' command that a cripple regain the ability to walk by crawling into the bed of the mute woman who lay next him at the shrine demonstrates the point. Both the hapless cripple and the startled woman were cured of their illnesses, as the man's unwanted proximity caused both the mute to cry out and the cripple then to take flight from sheer shock and fright:

> O wonderful counsel of the servants of Christ, what a plan full of salvation! The cripple taught the mute to talk, and the mute taught the cripple to run untroubled. Rather, neither the mute saved the cripple nor the cripple the mute, but God, through the saints, Cosmas and Damian, granted favour to both.[74]

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[71] *CosDam* 2, 9, 10, 17, 26.

[72] *CosDam* 5, 27, 28. For consideration of these themes in other miracle collections, see Dagron (1992), Auzépy (1995), and Déroche (2000).

[73] See also Dagron (1981*b*).

[74] *CosDam* 24 in Deubner, *Kosmas*, 163–4 (Festugière, *Collections*, 159): *ὦ τῆς καλῆς τῶν θεραπόντων τοῦ Χπριστοῦ συμβουλῆς, ὦ ὑπόθεσις σωτηρίας γέμουσα· ὁ πάρετος τὴν ἄφωνον ἐδίδαξεν λαλαῖν, ἡ ἄλαλος τὸν πάρετον ἀσκελίστως τρέχειν ἐδίδαξεν. μᾶλλον δὲ οὔτε ἡ ἄλαλος τὸν πάρετον οὔτε ὁ πάρετος τὴν ἄλαλον ἔσωσεν,*

This can be read as a succinct, if unadorned, 'orthodox' gloss on the saints' miracles, consistent with Eustratius's most up-to-date views: the saints were active in their own substance and energies (demonstrated here in their particular cunning), through their activity as God's intermediaries, whose healing power it ultimately was. The author's view of the saints' personal agency of their miracles was even more clearly expressed elsewhere:

> like good skippers, the servants of Christ, Cosmas and Damian, laid hold of the sick man's ship as it was tossed about by the tempest, and, through the rudder they had received from God, they preserved him, saved him and led him into the calm haven of health. For through their grace, they made the corrupted blood that overcame the man to be expelled through his intestines and rid him of his deadly disease in such a way that, being perfectly healed, he praised God and gave thanks to the saints, Cosmas and Damian, for the miracle accomplished in his favour.[75]

Given the polemic concerning the agency of the saints visible in Eustratius's treatise, the author's repeated emphasis in this passage upon the saints' personal activity in favour of their supplicant was arguably not coincidental. While the author of this miracle story acknowledged the ultimate origin of the saints' healing powers in the mandate (lit., 'rudder', πηδαλίῳ) given to them by God, the saints alone are subjects of transitive verbs ('preserved'/περιώδευσαν, 'saved'/διασώσαντες', 'led/ἤγαγον', 'rid/ἀπήλλαξαν') in the passage. In contrast, God appears as the mere object (direct or indirect) of two other verbs ('given'/δεδομένῳ, 'praised'/δοξάζειν'). The conclusion of another narrative recapitulated the efficacy of the saints' real personal agency in the broader setting of a prior 'mandate' given to them personally by God. 'The vomiting of suppurated blood came to a halt', the author wrote, 'through the activity of Saints Cosmas and

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αλλ' ὁ θεὸς τὴν σωτερίαν διὰ τῶν ἁγίων αὐτοῦ Κοσμᾶ καὶ Δαμιανοῦ ἀμφοτέροις χαρισζόμενος. For commentary, see Csepregi (2002) 102–6.

[75] *CosDam* 5 in Deubner, *Kosmas*, 109 (Festugière, *Collections*, 106): ὥσπερ καλοὶ κυβερνῆται οἱ τοῦ Χριστοῦ θεράποντες Κοσμᾶς καὶ Δαμιανὸς χειμαζομένην τὴν ναῦν τοῦ ἀσθενοῦντος κατέλαβον καὶ τῷ δεδομένῳ αὐτοῖς ὑπο τοῦ θεοῦ πηδαλίῳ τοῦτον διασώσαντες περιώδευσαν καὶ εἰς τὸν ὑγιῆ λιμένα τῆς γαλήνης αὐτὸν ἤγαγον. τὸ γὰρ ἐνοχλοῦν αὐτῷ καὶ σεσηπὸς αἷμα διὰ τῆς γαστρὸς ἐκκριθῆναι τῷ χαρίσματι αὐτῶν πεποιήκασιν καὶ πάσης αὐτὸν τῆς θανατικῆς νόσου ἀπήλλαξαν, ὥστε καὶ τοῦτον θεραπευθέντα τελίως δοξάζειν τὸν θεὸν εὐχαριστεῖν τε καὶ τοῖς ἁγίοις αὐτοῦ Κοσμᾷ καὶ Δαμιανῷ ἐπὶ τῷ θαύματι τῷ γενομένῳ εἰς αὐτόν.

Damian, and they guarded the sick man from harm. The man praised God and gave thanks to the saints for granting him back his life against all hope'.[76]

Like Eustratius, however, the *Miracles of Cosmas and Damian* asserted the limits of the saints' powers as much as their subjective reality. For one author, the model for the saints' relationship to God as sovereign was the willing obedience of the Empire's civil servants to the emperor's will.[77] Thus, we read that:

> With the saints, nothing ever happens randomly, for they are the stewards of divine grace. For if it is true that a man charged with imperial affairs would not handle them badly out of fear of the emperor, or rather because of his conscience, how much more the one entrusted with divine affairs will always do those things that serve God.[78]

Thus, *Cosmas and Damian*, despite always insisting that the saints were the true personal agents of their own miracles, also conceded that the saints' activity was constrained by their obedience to God. From an attentive reading of the collection, therefore, we discover that the saints' souls were not entirely 'free agents', but nor had they been assumed by God in a way that would destroy their personal integrity; rather, like Christ's human nature in relation to the divine Word, the saints' obedience to God was willed, reflecting not conflict but perfect cooperation or synergy (although this term is not in fact used). Unlike Eustratius, the *Miracles*' anonymous author does not employ Christological terminology directly; but his view of the nature of their activities is consistent with Eustratius's model. The saints' miracles were not feigned, as if really performed by God or angels, but truly the fruit of their own miraculous deposit; nevertheless, this did not make the saints, as Eustratius's critics implied, semi-divine beings outside God's sovereignty.

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[76] *CosDam* 6 in Deubner, *Kosmas*, 111 (Festugière, *Collections*, 108): *ἡ γὰρ ἀναγωγὴ τῶν ἐμπύων τῇ τῶν ἁγίων Κοσμᾶ καὶ Δαμιανοῦ ἐνεργείᾳ ἐπαύσατο, καὶ ἀβλαβῆ τὸν ἀσθενοῦντα διεφύλαξαν. ὅστις ἀνὴρ δοξάσας τὸν θεὸν καὶ εὐχαριστήσας τοῖς ἁγίοις, ἐφ' οἷς ἐξ ἀνελπίστιων τὸ ζῆν αὐτῷ ἐχαρισίσαντο* [. . .].

[77] See Dagron (1978) 95–6.

[78] *CosDam* 31 in Deubner, *Kosmas*, 177 (Festugière, *Collections*, 173): *οὐδὲν ἁπλῶς καὶ ὡς ἔτυχεν παρὰ τῶν ἁγίων γίνεται, οἰκονόμοι γάρ εἰσι θείων χαρισμάτων. εἰ γὰρ βασιλικά τις πράγματα ἐγχειρισθεὶς οὐκ ἂν αὐτοῖς χρήσαιτο κακῶς διὰ τὸν τοῦ βασιλέως φόβον, μᾶλλον δὲ διὰ τὸ συνειδός, πολλῷ μᾶλλον ὁ τὰ θεῖα ἐμπιστευμένος ἐκεῖνα πράξει, ἃ ἀεὶ τὸν θεὸν θεραπεύει.*

This distinction is crucial for understanding the purpose of a number of other miracle stories in the collection, including the following (Miracle Fifteen). Having been healed on several occasions by Cosmas and Damian, a woman had the saints' images 'painted on the whole wall of her house and gazed on them insatiately' (*εἰς πάντα τὸν τοῖχον τοῦ οἴκου αὐτῆς τούτους ἀνέγραψεν, ἀκόρεστος ἐκ τῆς θέας αὐτῶν ὑπάρχουσα*), an action which evidently provoked suspicions of idolatry and required the author to seek his audience's indulgence.[79] The blame that such unbridled devotion to the saints incurred dovetails with the anxieties concerning the potential idolatrousness of the saints' cult already highlighted in Constantinople and Rome. But the author defended the woman. 'Let none of the faithful blame this behaviour', he affirmed, 'for insatiety is everywhere judged to be blameless where it is a matter of benefit to the soul.'[80] Subsequently struck with abdominal pains, the woman ingested water mixed with paint she had scratched off the saints' images and was healed immediately, through, the author specified, 'the visitation of the saints' (*τῇ τῶν ἁγίων ἐπιφοιτήσει*). But as we might expect in a city where the saints' favours, and the propriety of their cult, were contested, the author was careful to distinguish the various agents involved in the miracle—the water–paint mixture, the saints, God—and to allot to each its due. Again, the author's model for saintly activity was comparable to Eustratius's. Certainly, the tone was similarly apologetic. 'Let nobody imagine', he asserted, 'that this miracle of the saints was an innovation, or that the woman was simply healed because of the action performed by her [i.e. ingesting the paint]. For the Lord said to all his holy apostles: "The works I do, you also shall do and even greater than these" (John 14.12).'[81]

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[79] *CosDam* 15 in Deubner, *Kosmas*, 137 (Festugière, *Collections*, 130). As Brown has put it, the woman was perceived to 'get physical' with an image in an age where the materiality of the image remained ambiguous in a Christian setting: Brown (1999*b*) 24. His comparison is with Pope Gregory the Great's (590–604) epistles on image veneration: *Epp*. 9.209, 11.10. See further below, 221–32.

[80] *CosDam* 15 in Deubner, *Kosmas*, 137 (Festugière, *Collections*, 130): *καὶ μηδεὶς ἐπιλάβοιτο τούτο, πιστοί, ἀκατηγόρητον γὰρ ἐπ' ὠφελεία ψυχῆς πανταχοῦ τὸ ἄπληστον κρίνεται*. See also Mango (1986) 139.

[81] *CosDam* 15 in Deubner, *Kosmas*, 138 (Festugière, *Collections*, 131): *καὶ μηδεὶς ὑπολάβοι καινὸν γεγενῆσθαι ὑπὸ τῶν ἁγίων τοῦτο τὸ θαῦμα, ἢ ἁπλῶς τὴν ἀσθενοῦσαν τεύξασθαι τῆς ἐκ τοῦ ἐπιτελεσθέντος παρ' αὐτῆς σχήματος ἰάσεως. φωνὴ γὰρ τοῦ κυρίου πρὸς πάντας τοὺς ἁγίους αὐτοῦ ἀποστόλους ἐστὶν ἥ λέγουσα· 'τὰ ἔργα, ἅ ἐγὼ ποιῶ, καὶ ὑμεῖς ποιήσετε, καὶ μείζονα τούτων ποιήσετε'.*

Against those who contested the reality of the saints' benefactions to the woman, therefore, the author of the story affirmed that the miracle was produced not by a power inherent in the image, but actually by the saints themselves whose image it was in the usual manner of their healings. The subsequent biblical citation (John 14.12) reflected the dangerous flipside of this assertion (namely, that the saints acted independently of God) and strongly recalls the use of John 5.17 in *On the State of Souls* and the *Dialogues*. Both citations were intended to allay concern regarding the idolatrousness of the saints' veneration by reassuring critics that God's divine power operated through them.[82] Indeed, the author of this story from *Cosmas and Damian* pointed to a further example from Scripture that confirmed the legitimacy of the saints' miraculous powers.[83] Although Jesus' shadow had never healed anyone, he noted, St Peter's shadow healed the crippled as he passed them in the Temple (Acts 5.12–16). The principle held for the late sixth century as well: 'These miracles [i.e. of Cosmas and Damian], too, our Lord performs through his saints'.[84] Although it has been alleged that this story, involving as it does an image of the saints, is an interpolation motivated by the iconoclast controversy of the eighth century, its authenticity seems to be supported by a mural painting of Cosmas and Damian, dated to the sixth century, and unearthed in the Roman agora at Thessalonica.[85]

Other miracles in the collection testify to the existence of a different critique of the healings reported at the shrine, one that was sceptical of attributing everything to the saints. In one miracle, for instance, a woman with a diseased uterus was advised by the saints to drink water mixed with sugar and mint; she was instantly healed. The author of the story commented, however, that the saints had only employed the beverage as an encouragement to the woman's faith. 'For', he claimed, 'these wise doctors [i.e. the saints] had no need of

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[82] Cf. Csepregi (2002) 116.

[83] On the 'scriptural layer' in early Byzantine hagiography, see Patlagean (1968) 117.

[84] *CosDam* 15 in Deubner, *Kosmas*, 138 (Festugière, *Collections*, 131): *ἀλλὰ καὶ ταῦτα ὁ κύριος ἡμῶν διὰ τῶν ἁγίων αὐτοῦ ἐνεργεῖ τὰ θαύματα.*

[85] See Fig. 2. For doubts about the story's authenticity, see Kitzinger (1954) 98 n. 45. On images of Cosmas and Damian, see Perraymond (1998) and Dal Santo (2011*a*). Note also a similar mural image of the Archangel Michael from sixth-century Aphrodisias: Cormack (1991).

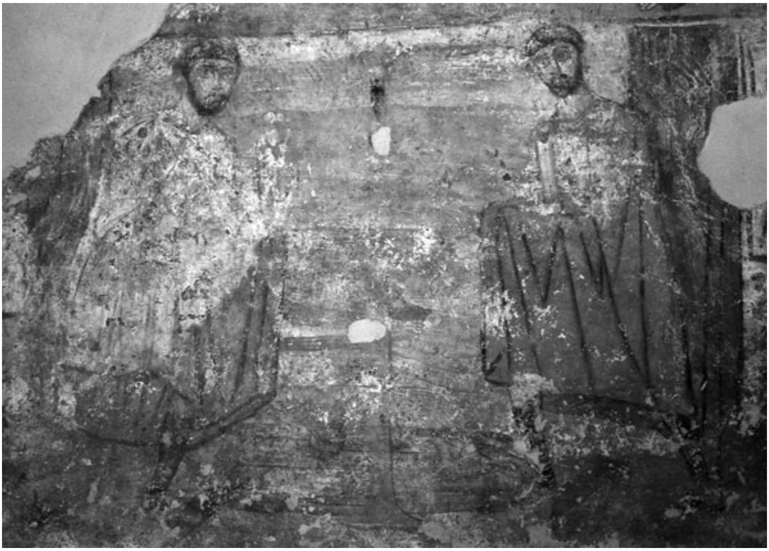

Fig. 2. Sixth-century mural painting of Sts Cosmas and Damian, Museum of Byzantine Culture, Thessaloniki. Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Tourism. Photo: M. Dal Santo.

these things to heal the sick woman.'[86] Similarly, when a man was cured of a stomach abscess by drinking cedar oil, its author asserted that the miracle came about 'through the assistance of the saints [. . .] – not through the draught of cedar oil'.[87]

Thus, in *The Miracles of Cosmas and Damian* the souls of the saints were undeniably active in their own substance *post mortem*, enjoying beyond the grave all of the perceptive and motive faculties they enjoyed while united to the body. Their miracles were truly 'theirs', even if the power to perform them originated in God. Of course, this is what we might expect from the author of a collection of saintly miracles. Yet, like Eustratius and Gregory, the collection's authors balanced the saints' personal miraculous activity by asserting that the saints were not 'loose cannons', free to perfom miracles without constraint. Rather, the saints' personal desires were conformed to

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[86] *CosDam* 8 in Deubner, *Kosmas*, 112 (Festugière, *Collections*, 109): *οὐδὲ γὰρ τούτων ἐδέοντο οἰ σοφοὶ ἰατροὶ πρὸς ἰατρείαν τῆς ἀσθενούσης.*

[87] *CosDam* 11 in Deubner, *Kosmas*, 127 (Festugière, *Collections*, 119): *συμμαχίᾳ τῶν θαυμαστῶν τούτων ἁγίων* [. . .] (*οὐδὲ γὰρ τῇ πόσει τῆς κεδραίς*) [. . .].

God's and all of their miraculous activity was ordered according to their respect for God's priorities.[88]

THE MIRACLES OF CYRUS AND JOHN

The shrine of the Egyptian martyrs, Cyrus and John, stood at Menouthis, fourteen miles east of Alexandria, and was founded according to tradition by Cyril of Alexandria in 427/8, near the site of a temple to Isis where incubation had been practised.[89] Although the traditional account of the shrine's origins and its later significance have been challenged, there can be no doubt that by the early seventh century, Cyrus and John's shrine was a pilgrimage destination of some importance, one that included incubation in the hope of receiving the saints' healing favour.[90] In his *Miracles of Cyrus and John*, Sophronius the 'sophist' (*c.* 550–638), later patriarch of Jerusalem, composed a record of the miracles which the saints performed at the shrine during a period at Alexandria between 608 and 614.[91] It would be easy to imagine the text circulating in the clerical and secular circles that surrounded the Chalcedonian patriarch that hosted Sophronius and a number of Sophronius's stories involved prominent figures of Alexandrian society that apparently travelled to the shrine.[92] As we shall see, the text suggests that a debate about the saints had reached Egypt even before the witness of the Question and Answer writers from the end of the century. Indeed, in view of the trenchant defence of the saints' miracles that Sophronius offered in the text, a recent commentator on the *Miracles of Cyrus and John* has concluded that 'the veneration of the martyrs must have been the subject of controversy in contemporary Alexandria'.[93] It will be argued here that the debate about the saints' miracles already observed in Eustratius's *On the State of Souls after Death* and Gregory the Great's *Dialogues on the Miracles of the Italian Fathers* (and to some extent, as we have argued, the *Miracles of Cosmas and Damian*) helps to contextualize the Alexandrian debate in the setting of a broader anxiety about the saints' cult and their miracles in the contemporary East Roman world. In any case, at the turn of the sixth and seventh centuries, uncertainty towards the saints' miracles certainly extended beyond Rome and Constantinople.

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[88] See the first chapter of this study, above 64–6.

[89] Montserrat (1998) 261–6; Sansterre (1991) 71–2; Delehaye (1911).

[90] See the revisionist theory of Gascou (2006), who argues that the shrine was constructed by the miaphysite Monastery of the Repentance at nearby Canopis after 520. When Chalcedonian authorities retook both monastery and shrine, the foundation by Cyril was forged. For the archaeological legacy of the shrine, see Papaconstantinou (2001) 135–6. She concludes that 'l'importance de ce culte a été considérablement exagérée par Sophrone'. On the sectarian loyalties of the shrine's clientèle, see Montserrat (1998) 276–9.

[91] Schönborn (1972) 64.

[92] See esp. *CyrJoh* 29 and 30.

Unlike the *Miracles of Cosmas and Damian*, the *Miracles of Cyrus and John* derive from the single hand of a figure known to history.[94] But no more than the former are the *Miracles of Cyrus and John* testimony to a society that placed unreserved faith in the miracles of the saints. Sophronius declared that he was 'committed to commending, not defaming, the saints. We should, and indeed shall, hold thus towards the holy martyrs, Cyrus and John, and towards the rest of the army of holy martyrs, and we urge all those who shine forth in the faith to think about and believe in them in this way.'[95] But clearly, as Eustratius and Gregory and the other texts we have surveyed here would confirm, there was real debate about this in his world.

In Sophronius's Alexandria, 'rationalist' critics of the saints frequently appear to have attributed the saints' to conventional medical treatments.[96] Thus, Sophronius described the pulverized glass rub that the saints applied to a man with elephantitis, the purpose of which painful remedy was that 'meddlesome doctors should not be able to think that the saints had presented him with something taken from Hippocrates, or claim that Hippocrates and Galen were responsible for the healing and that it was not the martyrs who had accomplished it, and so contemptuously dismiss in this way the saints' unspeakable power.'[97] Nevertheless, Sophronius still thought it best to specify that it was not on account of the pulverized glass itself that the swelling subsided, but because of the saints' invervention.[98] But the most dramatic instance of such Hippocratic competition to the saints was presented by one Gesius, the 'iatrosophist'.[99] Famed for his skill in Alexandria, Gesius scandalized Sophronius by exposing the Hippocratic origins of the medical treatment available at the shrine. '"This remedy", he said, "is Hippocratic and can be found in such-and-such treatise, and that treatment", he noised abroad, "is from Galen and can be found in this-or-other book", he proclaimed, "while this poultice can obviously be attributed to Democritus"'.[100] Indeed, Gesius denied any active contribution by the saints at all. On the contrary, Sophronius affirmed that he 'always attributed diseases to natural causes, as he did the cures which the saints dispensed. He also said that it was in accordance with medical rules that these cures were prescribed and brought about the elimination of illnesses.'[101] Naturally, Gesius was punished for his sceptical attitude. He soon fell sick and found himself unable to find any means of a cure through his medical knowledge. The saints then appeared to him in an apparition and ordered him to undergo a form of treatment

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[93] Gascou, *Sophrone*, 98 n. 564.

[94] For Sophronius's biography, see Schönborn (1972) 53–98. On his relationship with Moschus, see Chadwick (1974). On links with Rome, see Schönborn (1972) 91–5; Booth (2008) 132 ff.; also Ekonomou (2007) 88–91. On Sophronius and Gregory, see Thacker (1998) and Heid (2002). For Soprhonius's relationship with Maximus, see Schönborn (1972) 72 ff; and Louth (1996) 5–6, 14–17. On the Monothelite controversy in which Sophronius played a leading part, see Haldon (1997*b*) 297–317.

[95] *CyrJoh* 29 in Fernandez-Marcos, *Thaumata*, 29.80–5 (Gascou, *Sophrone*, 99): *ἅπαντας τοὺς μάρτυρας σέβομεν, καὶ τοὺς θαύματαπράττοντας, καὶ τοὺς οὐ πράττοντας θαύματα· καὶ λέγειν ὑπὲρ ἁγίων οὐ καταλέγειν ἁγίων σπουδάζομεν. Ἡμεῖς μὲν οὖν οὕτω περὶ Κύρου καὶ Ἰωάννου τῶν ἁγίων μαρτύρων καὶ τοῦ λοιποῦ τῶν ἁγίων μαρτύρων στρατεύματος ἔχοιμέν τε καὶ ἕξομεν, καὶ πάντας οὕτω τοὺς ἐν πίστει προλάμποντας, φρονεῖν περὶ αὐτῶν καὶ πιστεύειν προτρέπομεν.*

[96] On Sophronius's attitude towards medicine, see Delehaye (1925) 25; Nissen (1939) and Booth (2009). Incubation shrines seem sometimes to have been founded near contemporary hospitals: Knipp (2002) 6–8.

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[97] *CyrJoh* 15 in Fernandez-Marcos, *Thaumata*, 15.46–9 (Gascou, *Sophrone*, 67): μήπως ἰατρῶν οἱ περίεργοι, Ἱπποκράτειόν τι προσενέγκαι τοὺς ἁγίους νομίσωσιν, καὶ ταύτῃ τὴν ἄρρητον αὐτῶν σκορακίσωσιν δύναμιν, Ἱπποκράτην αἴτιον καὶ Γαληνὸν τῆς ἰάσεως, καὶ οὐ τοὺς μάρτυρας τοὺς δεδρακότας κηρύττοντες. See further Nissen (1939) 359: 'ihr gesamtes Heilverfahren ist grundsätzlich dem rationalen entgegengesetzt'.

[98] *CyrJoh* 15 in Fernandez-Marcos, *Thaumata*, 15.56–9 (Gascou, *Sophrone*, 68).

[99] See also Nissen (1939) 350–1, 357–8; and Maraval (1981) 385–6. On Hippocratic medicine as a source of competition to the saints, see above all Dagron (1981*a*). It should not, however, be imagined that hostility was inevitable: Horden (1982), (1985).

[100] *CyrJoh* 30 in Fernandez-Marcos, *Thaumata*, 30.29–34 (Gascou, *Sophrone*, 103): καὶ τοῦτο μὲν Ἱπποκράτειον ἔλεγε τὸ βοήθημα· τάδε γὰρ ἐν τῷδέ φησι τῷ συγγράμματι· τοῦτο δὲ Γαλήνειον ἐβόα τὸ φάρμακον, κἂν τῷδε κεῖσθαι τῷ λόγῳ διηγγέλλετο· ἄλλο δὲ Δημοκρίτειον εἶναι, διηγεῖτο σαφῶς τὸ ἐπίθεμα [. . .].

[101] *CyrJoh* 30 in Fernandez-Marcos, *Thaumata*, 30.36–9 (Gascou, *Sophrone*, 103): φυσιολογῶν ἀεὶ τὰ νοσήματα, καὶ τὰς τῶν διαδεδομένων ποιότητας, καὶ κατὰ λόγον αὐτὰ τὸν ἰατρικὸν ἐπιτάττεσθαι, καὶ τῶν παθημάτων ἐνεργεῖν τὴν καθαίρεσιν.

Hippocrates, Galen, and Democritus had never prescribed. He had to harness himself with a donkey's halter and bridle and, led like a beast by one of his servants, circumambulate the shrine, crying, 'I am a moron!'[102]

Another story concerned a rich noblewoman, named Athanasia, from Alexandria who mocked the saints and claimed that there was no documentary evidence that proved that any martyrs by the names of Cyrus and John ever existed.[103] To Sophronius, this suggested that Athanasia either 'inclined to pagan illusions out of some error that controlled her' (*πλάνῃ τινὶ κρατουμένῃ καὶ φάσμασιν Ἑλληνικοῖς ὑποκλίνουσα*), or that she was simply very stupid (*φρενὸς καὶ καρδίας ἁπλότητι*).[104] But despite Sophronius's aspersions (he called the woman 'impious and ignorant', *ἀσεβὲς καὶ ἀπαίδευτον*), Athanasia provides a compelling example of how far not only Cyrus and John's purported miracles, but also the whole foundation of their cult was contemporaneously disputed. Moreover, Sophronius was aware that Athanasia's criticism of the cult of Cyrus and John was the tip of an iceberg: such demands for authentic proof of martyrdom would have threatened thousands of local cults. For, if the church restricted its honours to those saints for whom authentic acts existed, he believed, there would be none left to venerate. 'Without the myriads of martyrs watching over us', Sophronius further affirmed, 'we would be in danger, deprived of those who intercede with Christ on our behalf through the sprinkling of their own blood.'[105] In other words, incredulity towards a particular cult reflected a latent deficit of confidence in them all. For Sophronius, however, tradition and the fact that Cyrus and John performed miracles were enough to justify the cult that was offered to them. And in this case, too, a miracle was duly provided: like Gesius,

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[102] *CyrJoh* 30 in Fernandez-Marcos, *Thaumata*, 30–90 (Gascou, *Sophrone*, 104). Elsewhere Sophronius also sought to provide empirical evidence for the saints' apparitions in a manner not unlike that we have observed in Cosmas and Damian above. See the bruises the saints left on the body of one supplicant, which 'bore witness to the will of the saints' (*τῷ τῶν ἁγίων μαρτυροῦντας βουλήματι*): *CyrJoh* 39 in Fernandez-Marcos, *Thaumata*, 40.97–8 (Gascou, *Sophrone*, 149).

[103] See Maraval (1981) 385; and Dagron (1992) 60–1.

[104] *CyrJoh* 29 in Fernandez-Marcos, *Thaumata*, 29.39–44 (Gascou, *Sophrone*, 98). On accusations of paganism at this time, see Cameron (1993) 141.

[105] *CyrJoh* 29 in Fernandez-Marcos, *Thaumata*, 29.50–2 (Gascou, *Sophrone*, 98): *ἐν κινδύνοις δὲ καὶ ἡμεῖς γενησόμεθα, μὴ μυριάσι μαρτύρων φρουρούμενοι, καὶ ταῖς οἰκείων αἱμάτων προσχύσεσι, ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν τὸν Χριστὸν πρεσβεύοντας ἔχοντες.*

Athanasia was punished for her scepticism. Paralyzed and with Alexandria's doctors unable to cure her, Cyrus and John appeared to the noblewoman and announced that her crippling was the result of her disbelief in the saints. They urged her to go to their shrine and be healed. Athanasia did so and became an enthusiastic devotee of their gracious benefactions.

But criticism of the saints could come from unexpected quarters. According to Sophronius, even the wife of the shrine's chief custodian was chastised by the saints for opposing her husband's appointment to Menouthis.[106] She also disbelieved that they could heal her eye disorder.

Other stories from *Cyrus and John* seem to attest to more specific awareness of the allegations against the saints which roused Eustratius at Constantinople. In *On the State of Souls*, Eustratius had asked of his opponents, 'How, then, do the blessed and holy martyrs remain, as you say, without any operation or activity? For very often Revelation makes clear that they are with Christ and intercede for us without ceasing'.[107] Demonstrating the saints' *παρρησία* ('freedom of speech') before God from beyond the grave represented Sophronius's overwhelming priority in a number of *Cyrus and John*'s narratives. Thus, Miracle Thirty-Six turned entirely on vindicating the effectiveness of the saints' intercession for a young man named Theodorus who, afflicted by gout, had applied to the saints for healing. As Theodorus was a miaphysite, however, Cyrus and John refused to help him. If he converted to Chalcedonianism, the saints promised, they would assuredly succeed in interceding with God for him.[108] Clearly, the story, like *Cyrus and John* itself, cannot be separated from the confessional politics of the early seventh-century Egyptian Church and the protracted struggle between Chalcedonian and miaphysite sects for the loyalty of the population.[109] But the story also consistently foregrounds the saints' intercessory abilities. As the saints put it: 'If you allowed yourself to be persuaded of what we without ceasing advise you to do and adopt our faith, we too shall hear you and pray for you to Christ, our God and Lord. [. . .] For how can we intercede for you if you disobey us?' When Theodorus subsequently converted, the saints were true to their word. Appearing to the convert in another apparition, the saints led him to behold what Sophronius described as a great image of the *deesis* standing in a magnificent temple.[110] Christ stood in the heavenly throne room flanked by the Mother of God and St John the Baptist, surrounded by a host of saints, among whom were Cyrus and John themselves. Theodorus later recounted that Cyrus and John prostrated themselves directly before Christ:

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[106] *CyrJoh* 9.

[107] Eustratius of Constantinople, *De statu animarum post mortem* = CCG 60.717–20: *Πῶς οὖν ἀνενέργητοι ἢ ἄπρακτοι καθ' ὑμᾶς εἰπεῖν μένουσιν οἱ μακάριοι ἅγιοι μάρτυρες; Πολλακῶς γὰρ Ἀποκάλυψις αὐτῶν διεσάφησεν, ὅτι σὺν τῷ Χριστῷ ὄντες ἀπαύστως ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν πρεσβεύουσιν.*

[108] *CyrJoh* 36 Fernandez-Marcos, *Thaumata*, 36.80–5 (in Gascou, *Sophrone*, 128): *Εἰ οὖν πεισθείης ἡμῖν εἰς ὅ σοι συνεχῶς συμβουλεύομεν, καὶ γένῃ περὶ τὴν πίστιν ὁμόδοξος, καὶ ἡμεῖς σοι πειθόμεθα, καὶ Χριστὸν περὶ σοῦ τὸν Θεὸν καὶ Δεσπότην ἡμῶν ἱκετεύσομεν [. . .] πῶς γὰρ αὐτὸν περὶ σοῦ λιτανεύσωμεν ἀπειθοῦς ἡμῖν διαμένοντος.*

[109] For the complex sectarian situation, see Gascou (2005) 14; Maraval (1981) 388–9.

> 'Give the command, Lord!' they cried out. Christ, moved deep within, signalled his mercy with a nod and said from the icon, 'Grant him his request'. The martyrs rose from the ground and gave thanks first to Christ our God for having heeded their supplications. Then, full of joy and gladness, they said to me: 'Behold, God has granted you grace [. . .]'.[111]

With its depiction of the great company of saints in heaven, Cyrus and John's direct access to Christ and the overwhelmingly efficacious outcome of their intercession, Sophronius's story dramatically recapitulated the saints' activity *post mortem* that Eustratius advocated.

Of course, Eustratius's opponents had attributed the saints' posthumous miracles to angels who assumed the saints' appearance. For Sophronius, however, the saints' activities *post mortem* were to be seen as clearly distinct from and, indeed, superior to those of these spiritual beings. Thus, in Miracle Fifty-One, Sophronius, sensitive to defending the saints' role as effective intercessors before God, underscored their supremacy over the angels. When George the Cilician, a priest who had been devoted to the saints since boyhood, was struck dead *twice*, the saints succeeded on both occasions in extending George's life. On the first occasion, George died and saw the angels coming to take him away. Soon, however, the saints appeared, negotiating with the angels to release George and allow him to live. This was impossible, said the angels, 'customarily subject to the divine will' (*θείῳ δὲ θεσπίσματι κατὰ τρόπον δουλεύουσαι*), but they would wait until the outcome of the saints' intercession with God.[112] Emphasizing the saints' own much greater autonomy, Sophronius immediately demonstrated the efficacy of Cyrus and John's intercession and the distinctness of their activities from those of the angels:

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[110] Like other references to images in early Byzantine hagiography, this story of Sophronius's has been cast as potentially an iconophile interpolation of the eighth or ninth century: Kitzinger (1954) 106 n. 86. But the icon of the *deesis* it refers to receives some authentification from a similar image found in the church of Santa Maria Antiqua at Rome and dated to the seventh century. See Nordhagen (2000) 116–18. On incubation at this site, see Knipp (2002).

[111] *CyrJoh* 36 in Fernandez-Marcos, *Thaumata*, 36.252–8 (Gascou, *Sophrone*, 135): *τὸ Κελεύεις Δέσποτα, μόνον ἀνέκραζον, καὶ ὁ Χριστὸς σπλαγχνισθεὶς ὡς οἰκτίρμων ἐπένευσε, καί, Δότε αὐτῷ, πρὸς τῆς εἰκόνος ἐφθέγξατο. Καὶ χαμόθεν ἀναστάντες οἱ μάρτυρες, πρῶτον μὲν εὐχαρίστουν Χριστῷ τῷ Θεῷ ἡμῶν, ὡς τῆς δεήσεως αὐτῶν ὑπακούσαντι: ἔπειτα δὲ χαίροντες καὶ γαννύμενοι, Ἰδού, φασὶν πρὸς ἐμέ, ὁ Θεὸς τὴν χάριν ἐδωρήσατο.*

> Receiving the angels' response, the martyrs began to make supplication. On bended knee before God, they prayed that the one who venerated them (*τὸν λάτρην*) would be given to them. As they did so, a voice came down from heaven, ordering that the priest be handed over to the martyrs and assigning him twenty more years in the flesh. That is how this excellent man came to escape death, that is, through the earnestness of the martyrs (*μαρτύρων σπουδῇ*) and the gift of God.[113]

Indeed, when George's additional twenty years expired, he was again the recipient of the saints' intercession. Met a second time by the angels, the saints again prevailed. With its double vindication of the saints' effective benefactions to a long-standing devotee of theirs, Sophronius's tale drew attention to the saints' extraordinary activity beyond the grave. Moreover, his own comment on the miracle seems to allude to the substance of the Constantinopolitan debate. 'Twice dying and twice escaping death, the man became proof of the saints' familiarity with God (*τῆς τῶν ἁγίων πρὸς Θεὸν παρρησίας*), an image of the saints' power and grace (*εἰκὼν τῆς αὐτῶν ἰσχύος καὶ χάριτος*).'[114]

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[112] *CyrJoh* 51 in Fernandez-Marcos, *Thaumata*, 51.106–7 (Gascou, *Sophrone*, 183).

[113] *CyrJoh* 51 in Fernandez-Marcos, *Thaumata*, 51.109–15 (Gascou, *Sophrone*, 183): *Ταύτην λαβόντες οἱ μάρτυρες τὴν ἀπόκρισιν, πρὸς ἱκετείαν ἐτρέποντο, καὶ πρὸς Θεὸν τὰ γόνατα κλίναντες, δωρηθῆναι αὐτοῖς τὸν λάτρην ἐδέοντο· καὶ τοῦτο ποιούντων, ἀπ᾽ οὐρανοῦ φωνὴ κατεφέρετο, διδόναι προστάττουσα τοῖς μάρτυσι τὸν πρεσβύτερον, καὶ χρόνους εἴκοσι ἐν σαρκὶ διορίζουσα. Καὶ οὕτω μὲν οὗτος ὁ θαυμάσιος τὸν τότε διέφυγε θάνατον,* [. . .] *μαρτύρων σπουδῇ καὶ θείῳ δωρήματι.*

Perhaps even Eustratius could not have affirmed the saints' ongoing activity *post mortem*, and personal responsibility for the miraculous benefactions they unfailingly showed to their supplicants, in stronger terms than Sophronius, the accomplished sophist, contrived to do so here.[115] Certainly, the alternative account, that downplayed the posthumous activity of the disembodied human soul and therefore attributed the saints' miracles to angels, was known, outside Constantinople, to Anastasius of Sinai during the 680s.[116] As examples of divine–human synergy, Cyrus and John were important to Sophronius's duothelite Christology.[117] Denying the saints' personal integrity as human wonder-workers would, from this perspective, have laid the Christology he used them to model open to the charge of being the kind of pilloried 'docetism' that Chalcedonians were typically (if unjustly) wont to present the anti-Chalcedonian Christ as representing. If in the incarnate Christ the divine Logos must not be presented as assuming merely the appearance, and not the complete reality of the flesh, neither should it be believed that God or the angels assumed the saints' appearance to perform the miracles ascribed to them. On the contrary, the saints recapitulated the synergy between God and man that the Incarnation made possible. Although a direct link with Eustratius's apology for the saints at Constantinople cannot be proved, in his representation of the saints' vigorous activity after death, Sophronius seems to have been responding to the debate on the nature of the saints' condition *post mortem* and the authenticity of their miracles as deeds of their own doing, that formed part, in the early seventh century, of the historical context in which his collection of Cyrus and John's miracles was composed.

It has been observed before that Sophronius was careful to avoid potential accusations of 'idolatry' by presenting the saints' own human initiative as circumscribed within an overarching divine economy.[118] He may be likened in this to other exponents of a 'strong view' of the saints' personal thaumaturgical powers, such as Eustratius whose notion of synergy intimately mingled the divine presence with the saints' own human activities, and Gregory the Great, for whom the saints' miracles were constrained by God's own character of love and humility.[119] In the miracle narratives from *Cyrus and John* discussed so far, we can already recognize Sophronius's concern to underline the importance of Christ's role in acceding to the requests contained in the saints' intercessions for the coming to fruition of the miraculous event. Sophronius emphasized this still more strongly in Miracle Forty-Two. In this account, Eugenius, a land surveyor with dropsy, decided to repair to the saints' shrine, where the saints healed him on the very night he arrived. This provoked the indignation of three women supplicants of the saints who had each spent a year at the shrine, fruitlessly awaiting the saints' visitation. Why had they had to wait, they demanded? In an apparition to the women, Cyrus and John replied that it was not they, but Christ, who decided which supplicants to heal. Significantly for Sophronius's view of the limits upon the saints' extraordinary powers, Cyrus and John affirmed that they interceded equally for all of their supplicants (*ὑπὲρ πάντων ὁμοίως τὰς ἱκετείας προσφέρομεν*), but did nothing without Christ's approval. The saints advised as follows:

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[114] *CyrJoh* 51 in Fernandez-Marcos, *Thaumata*, 51. 119–21 (Gascou, *Sophrone*, 183): Ὃς δεύτερον τεθνεώς, καὶ φυγὼν ἐκ θανάτου τὸ δεύτερον, τῆς τῶν ἁγίων πρὸς Θεὸν παρρησίας ἕστηκεν ἔλεγχος, καὶ εἰκὼν τῆς αὐτῶν ἰσχύος καὶ χάριτος.

[115] On Sophronius's accomplishments as a rhetor in the *Miracles*, see Duffy (1984*b*).

[116] Dagron (1992) 61–4; cf. Krausmüller (1998–99). See also the appendix below.

[117] See Booth (2009); and Schönborn (1972) 225–8, 237–8.

> Therefore, entreat him [. . .] to grant you the grace of healing. If he is moved and only gives the order, we will immediately become the executors of his divine commands. But without his approval, we can neither keep nor send away those who come to us.[120]

Similarly, in Miracle Sixty-Two, Rhodope, a noblewoman from Antioch, travelled to the saints because of a disease. At the shrine, however, she was dismayed to see Cyrus and John tending to the other supplicants but passing her by. She called out for an explanation. The saints replied that the term of her life had arrived, decreed by Christ. Against this they could do nothing. 'For we are neither the dispensers nor the executors of this, but Christ, God, Lord and Master of all, who holds the power of life and death. [. . .] What cure of immortality can we give you?'[121]

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[118] Sansterre (1991) 75; Déroche (2000) 164.

[119] See the first chapter of this study above.

[120] *CyrJoh* 42 in Fernandez-Marcos, *Thaumata*, 42.54–65 (Gascou, *Sophrone*, 156): *Τοῦτον οὖν [. . .] ἱκετεύσατε, τὴν χάριν παράσχειν τῶν ὑμετέρων ἰάσεων· καὶ εἰ σπλαγχνισθείη, καὶ μόνον κελεῦσαι καταξιώσειεν, ταχέως ἡμεῖς πληρωταὶ τῶν θείων αὐτοῦ θεσπισμάτων γιγνόμεθα· οὗ χωρὶς ἐπινεύσεως, οὔτε κρατεῖν οὔτε ἀπολύειν τοὺς πρὸς ἡμᾶς ἐρχομένους δυνάμεθα.*

Yet the saints' (and through them, Sophronius's) protestations here exposed the paradox that underlay the vision of the saints as miraculous agents in their own divinized substance that Eustratius (and Sophronius) espoused. That is to say, the saints were necessarily represented as effective intercessors *post mortem* by those who championed their cults, but, simultaneously, such stories as these from *Cyrus and John* display that it was nevertheless imperative for hagiographers to ward against the notion that the Christian saints could be considered 'gods' in their own right, semi-divine beings who stood beyond the one God's ultimate sovereignty. Obligatory limitations thus pressed down upon their powers—as Eustratius in his apology and Gregory in the *Dialogues* affirmed. The striking contrast between Sophronius's depiction of Cyrus and John's inability to assist Rhodope, on one hand, and their successful ransoming of George the Cilician (Mir. 51, above), on the other, demonstrate how far hagiographers wavered in deciding exactly what these limitations were and when they applied. From this paradox a number of tensions derived, which understandably fuelled contemporary criticism of the saints' apparently contradictory, and inconsistent, favours.[122] Indeed, it is opportune to recall Deacon Peter's observation in Gregory the Great's second dialogue regarding the apparent anomaly between the saints' ability sometimes to perform miracles which, on other occasions, they seemed unable to accomplish.[123]

Like Eustratius in his apology and Gregory the Great in his *Dialogues*, Sophronius perceived the rhetorical benefits to be gained by modelling the saints' miracles upon those of Christ. Thus, at the end of one miracle narrative, Sophronius wrote concerning the exorcism of a demon that 'the martyrs were glorified, as was Christ who performs these miracles through them.'[124] Likewise, a deacon at the shrine had a vision of the saints inviting him to a feast. Its meaning was later revealed to him as signifying the joy that the saints derived from performing miracles for their supplicants. Sophronius himself commented that he 'admire[d] this miracle of the saints perhaps more than all the others, for, by likening the miracle to a feast, they were perfectly imitating Christ, the Master and God of all things.'[125] Indeed, the saints' 'feast' prompted Sophronius to remember the words Christ spoke to his disciples: 'My food is to do the will of him who sent me' (John 4.34). With its several references, moreover, to the form (*τὰ σχήματα*) in which the saints appeared, Sophronius's *Cyrus and John* offers further points of comparison to Eustratius's defence of the saints' apparitions in *On the State of Souls*. We shall return to these below.

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[121] *CyrJoh* 62 in Fernandez-Marcos, *Thaumata*, 62.57–62 (Gascou, *Sophrone*, 203): *ὧν οὐχ ἡμεῖς δοτῆρες ἢ διῶκται τυγχάνομεν, ἀλλὰ Χριστὸς ὁ τῶν ὅλων Θεὸς καὶ Δεσπότης καὶ πρύτανις, ὁ ζωῆς καὶ θανάτου κατέχων τοὺς οἴακας.* [. . .] *ποίας ἀθανασίας ὀρέξομεν φάρμακον.*

[122] See further Déroche (2000) 150–1.

[123] See Chapter One of this book above, 49–50.

[124] *CyrJoh* 9 in Fernandez-Marcos, *Thaumata*, 9.11 (Gascou, *Sophrone*, 48): *οἱ δὲ μάρτυρες ἐδοξάζοντο, καὶ Χριστὸς ὁ Θεὸς ὁ δι᾽ αὐτῶν ἐνεργῶν τὰ παράδοξα.*

THE MIRACLES OF DEMETRIUS

Just as Sophronius was composing his record of the wonders which Cyrus and John performed, beyond the grave, for pilgrims at Menouthis, Archbishop John of Thessalonica underlined the efficacy of the posthumous intercession of his city's own heavenly benefactor, St Demetrius.[126] Written down according to its modern editor during the early years of the reign of Heraclius, John's *Miracles of Demetrius* focused on the saint's activity in Thessalonica during the episcopate of John's predecessor, Eusebius, during the 580s and 590s. This was an exceedingly difficult period in the city's history and invading Slavs and Avars, as the *Miracles* themselves recounted, almost overwhelmed its defences on a number of occasions. According to Archbishop John, however, Thessalonica was delivered through all of its trials by its sainted patron, the martyr, Demetrius. Thus, it was said that when civil strife threatened the city, Demetrius personally intervened to restore peace. John was assured that it was the saint himself who had brought this about because, in a dream, a man entered the saint's shrine (the famous silver *κιβωρίον* in the north aisle of his basilica) and saw Demetrius pleading with a nobly dressed woman named Eutaxia ('Good Order'). Although she sought to leave Thessalonica, the saint pulled her back. A monk later interpreted the vision as signifying the saint's successful intercession for the city and the restoration of 'good order'.[127]

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[125] *CyrJoh* 11 in Fernandez-Marcos, *Thaumata*, 11 (Gascou, *Sophrone*, 55): *Ἐγὼ δὲ τῶν ἁγίων μετὰ πάντων καὶ τοῦτο τεθαύμακα, ὅτιπερ καλῶς ἐν ᾧ πᾶσι Χριστῷ διδασκάλῳ καὶ Θεῷ τῶν ὅλων ἑπόμενοι δείπνῳ κἀνταῦθα τὸ θαῦμα παρείκασαν.*

[126] Lemerle, *Démétrius*, II, 27–34. See also Jugie (1922); Stiernon (1973); Cormack (1985) 60–1.

Like Sophronius and other writers from this period, John underscored the effectiveness of the saint's intercession by demonstrating the primacy of Demetrius's prayers over the activities of the angels. When, for example, during the Avar–Slav siege of September 586, the city was about to fall, John related that a high-ranking civilian dreamt that he saw two angels dressed as imperial guardsmen enter Demetrius's shrine and demand that he quit the city because God had ordered Thessalonica's destruction. But the saint resisted, telling the angels that the city's fate would be his: either God would relent when he heard the saint's prayers, or he would 'perish' with the city.[128] Shortly thereafter, the city was saved and the efficacy of Demetrius's intercessions manifested. Indeed, the man who had the dream was certain that it was Demetrius who had saved the city because the figure he saw in the vision matched exactly 'the form in which he is represented in his ancient images'.[129] Among these images was 'the saint's divine effigy' (*τὸ θεοειδὲς πρόσωπον τοῦ αὐτοῦ πανσέπτου ἀθλοφόρου*) which John described as prominently mounted on his famous silver shrine.[130] It could be argued, therefore, that, against the rationalists at Constantinople, John sided with Eustratius and Gregory in ascribing to the saints' disembodied souls not only *post-mortem* activity in their own substance, but also the retention of their bodies' physical form. Certainly, John also assumed that the saints' perceptive ability and aesthetic senstitivities survived the soul's separation from the body.[131] On one occasion, the ability of the saint's soul to speak directly to the living was proved by the fact that, when the sacristan at the basilica decided to steal some candles,

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[127] See *Dem*. 10.

[128] See Déroche (2000) 145–6, 151–2.

[129] Lemerle, *Démétrius*, I, 162: *ἦν γὰρ τῇ ἰδέᾳ κατὰ τὴν γραφὴν τὴν ἐν ταῖς ἀρχαιοτέραις αὐτοῦ εἰκόσιν ἐγγεγραμμένην.*

[130] Lemerle, *Démétrius*, I, 66. See also ibid., 102, 115. Note also Cormack (1985) 67: 'The implication is that [Demetrius's] presence was a physical one, and that his appearance was identicial with the depictions in the church'.

[131] *Dem*. 6.

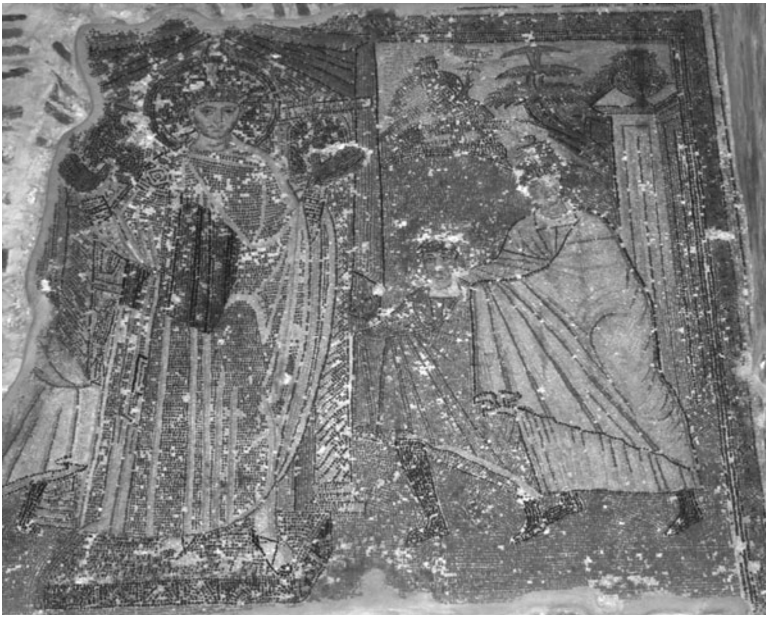

Fig. 3. Church of St Demetrius, Thessaloniki. Mosaic depiction of Demetrius interceding for the citizens of Thessalonica. Before 620. Photo: M. Dal Santo.

Demetrius rebuked him with a voice audible to the sacristan's physical ears. The lesson to be taken from this was clear. 'We must take care', John affirmed, 'to obey those set over us in God's benevolence from among his saints. For if we do not, we grieve them at our own peril. See into what a blazing fury this event drove the saint, that he openly cried aloud in a perceptible voice (*φωνῇ αἴσθητῇ*) against the one who presently angered him there.'[132]

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[132] *Dem*. 7 in Lemerle, *Démétrius*, I, 99: *Ἡμεῖς δὲ προσέχειν ὀφείλομεν, ὅτι δεῖ πειθαρχεῖν τοῖς εὐδοκίᾳ θεοῦ παρὰ τῶν ἁγίων αὐτοῦ προσταττομένοις: εἰ δὲ μή γε, λυποῦμεν αὐτοὺς ἐπὶ τῷ ἑαυτῶν ὀλέθρῳ. Ὁρᾶτε γὰρ εἰς οἵαν ἔξαψιν ἐκίνησε τὸ πρᾶγμα τὸν ἀγίον, ὡς καὶ ἀναφανδὸν κράξαι φωνῇ αἴσθητῇ παρισταμένῳ παροργίσαντι.* On another occasion, John related the decision of his predecessor, Archbishop Eusebius, to remodel the saint's fire-damaged shrine. But even before Eusebius had revealed his plan to anyone, Demetrius appeared thrice to a priest, warning Eusebius not alter his abode: *Dem*. 6. On saints' interaction with the living in early medieval France, see Geary (1994) esp. 118–19.

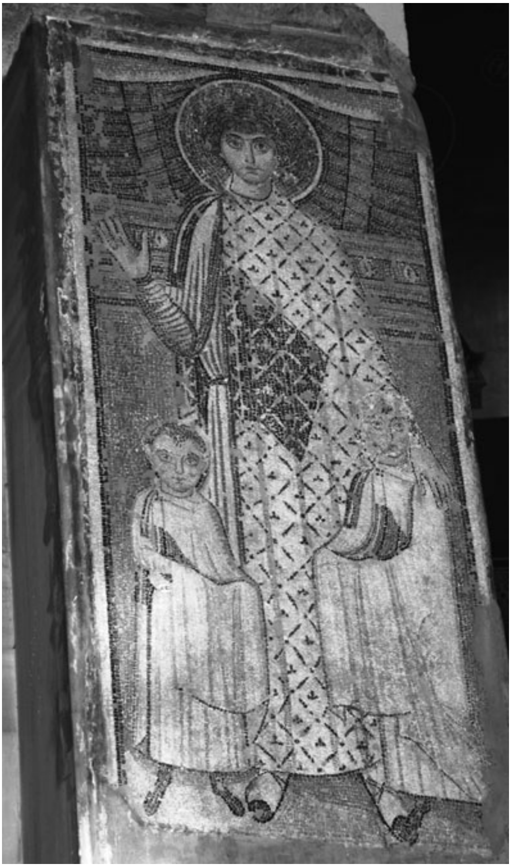

Fig. 4. Church of St Demetrius, Thessaoloniki. Mosaic ex-voto: Demetrius with children, *c*. 620. Photo: M. Dal Santo.

As we shall see, however, not all of Thessalonica's inhabitants heeded their archibishop's exhortation to 'to obey those set over us in God's benevolence from among his saints' or connived at John's attempt to impute the city's various deliverances to Demetrius. Indeed, in the context of Eustratius and Gregory's late sixth-century apologies for the saints, John's *Miracles of Demetrius* can be read as a sustained defence of a particular 'saintly' aetiology that was addressed to apparently unconvinced sceptics who seem openly to have questioned Demetrius's role in the life of the city, not least in delivering it from repeated earthquakes, famines, plagues, and traumatic sieges.[133] John set the tone for this apology from the outset of the *Miracles* through his stress upon the importance of recognizing the activities of divine providence ('his sovereign and providential will') in all things.[134] Just as Gregory the Great had earlier believed that the saints' miracles could reveal the spiritual world which fleshly man had forgotten, so John was confident that this anthology of Demetrius's miracles in Thessalonica would prove the truth of God's governance of the world and the ultimate origin of all things in his will. But like Gregory, John's view of providence was expansive enough to accommodate the saints' role as effective intercessors who actively strove to attract God's favour for their supplicants and regularly succeeded in doing so. John began:

> It is of sainted Demetrius that I speak, who was and remains your diligent fellow citizen, who lives for ever for us and in God [. . .]: for us, inasmuch as he intercedes ceaselessly with God and brings about for us all that is profitable and beneficial; in God, inasmuch as he is ceaselessly with him in spirit and serves him now even better than he did in the flesh. With his mind and thoughts intensely and indelibly fixed upon us, the unworthy, he intercedes through everything to bend it to a happy outcome for us.[135]

In other words, God in his providence was sovereign, but Demetrius could change his mind. It is equally clear from the prologue that, with Eustratius and Gregory, John also conceived of Demetrius's miracles as the fruit of a certain synergy between divine and human initiatives, one that fully preserved the saint's personal role in every one of his miracles. His soul, in John's view, undoubtedly active in heaven, the martyr was Thessalonica's 'unshakeable spiritual rampart', 'impregnable walls', and 'peaceful refuge'.[136]

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[133] Skedros (1999) 122–4. See futher Dagron (1992) 61: 'l'hagiographie de cette époque décrit [. . .] et prend en compte une société où l'on se soigne et où l'on s'efforce d'expliquer scientifiquement les phénomènes naturels'.

[134] *Dem*. Prol.1–2 in Lemerle, *Démétrius*, vol. I, 50: *τῷ γὰρ παντοκρατορικῷ καὶ προνοητικῷ αὐτοῦ νεύματι πάντα τε τὰ ὄντα εἰς τὸεἶναι παράγει, καὶ πᾶσι τοῦ εὖ εἶναι καθίσταται αἴτιος.*

[135] *Dem*. Prol. 4–5 in Lemerle, *Démétrius*, vol. I, 51: *Δημήτριός ἐστιν ὁ πανάγιος,* [. . .] *ὁ σοῦ μὲν πολίτης φιλόπονος γεγονὼς καὶ ὑπάρχων, ζῇ γὰρ ἀεὶ καὶ ἡμῖν καὶ θεῷ* [. . .]· *ἡμῖν μὲν διὰ τοῦ πρεσβεύειν ἀδιαλείπτως θεῷ καὶ διαπορθμεύειν ἡμῖν τὰ συμφέροντα· θεῷ δὲ διὰ τοῦ παρεστάναι αὐτῷ νοερῶς ἀδιαλείπτῳ εὐαρεστήσει, πλέον τῆς ἐν σαρκὶ ζωῆς νῦν ἀποθεραπεύων αὐτόν, τῷ τὴν ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν τῶν ἀναξίων φροντίδα πολλὴν καὶ ἀνεξάλειπτον ἔχειν ἐν ἑαυτῷ πρόνοιαν, εἰς εὐμενεῖς ἡμῖν καταλλαγὰς διὰ παντὸς ἐπικάμπτειν πρεσβεύοντα.*

As at Constantinople, Rome, and Alexandria, however, there were those at Thessalonica who did not share their archbishop's confidence in the economy of saintly miracles with which they were presented. Recalling Gregory's prologue to the *Dialogues*, John asserted that he chose not to relate all of the miracle stories he had heard concerning Demetrius, but only those he had learnt from reliable witnesses or witnessed himself; that is, as he said elsewhere, what he had seen with his own eyes and heard with his own ears.[137] Nevertheless, the latent incredulity of some members of John's audience was manifest on one occasion when John challenged those who considered his tale to be 'lies' (*ψευδῆ*) to find the miracle corroborated in the mosaics that represented it on the basilica walls.[138] Elsewhere, John appealed to the Thessalonians' own experience of deliverance, anticipating his audience's scruples. 'But', he wrote, 'will you ask whether these things really occurred in this manner? Of course they did, for did we not witness them with our own eyes?'[139] On a further occasion John affirmed that, as his audience witnessed the saint's miraculous salvation of the city from a surprise Slav attack for themselves, he did not have to convince them of the story's veracity.[140]

But as mentioned, the sheer number of miracles that the archbishop claimed on Demetrius's behalf could also represent an obstacle to his audience's faith in the benefactions the saint purportedly lavished on their city. This 'miraculous satiety' on his audience's part was not entirely anodine, since, as John realized, it could easily lead to outright incredulity itself.[141] Rather, the *Miracles of Demetrius* manifest the deep epistemological shift in late antique models of causation that was required to make the cult of saints plausible and throughout the later sixth and early seventh centuries, an alternative rationalist account was always available for a range of phenomena.[142] Indeed, it has been noted that '[t]here was [. . .] a more than usually intense preoccupation in East Mediterranean society at this time with the nature of causation and its relationship to human actions, however heavily disguised this may often have been by "common sense" preoccupations'.[143] The pressing nature of this question in Thessalonica was displayed during a severe plague in July 586.[144] Partisans of the cult of Demetrius claimed that refuge could be found by sleeping in the basilica that housed the saint's shrine, where every night, according to John, the saint made his rounds: those whom the saint visited recovered the following morning, whereas those whom the saint ignored, died or recovered only after a long delay. Nevertheless, the fact that some did die at the shrine undermined the appearance of Demetrius's ability to save the others who took refuge there. In answering the hesitations about Demetrius's reliability as a heavenly patron that this situation clearly provoked, John stressed that the shrine's failure to provide absolute protection should not be ascribed to any inability or weakness on Demetrius's part. 'Let us not impiously condemn the martyr who watches over us of impotence, hardness of heart or favouritism', he appealed:

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[136] ibid. See also Skedros (1999) 124–31.

[137] See *Dem*. Prol. 8. in Lemerle, *Démétrius*, I, 53: *Οὐκ ἐκεῖνα γοῦν τὰ παμπληθῆ καὶ παλαιότερα διηγεῖσθαι προῄρημαι, ἀλλὰ καθὼς ὁ παρθένος ἀπόστολος ἔφησεν, 'ἃ ἀκηκόαμεν', δῆλον δὲ ὅτι παρὰ τῶν πείρᾳ παρειληφότων ἢ ἀκριβείᾳ μεμαθηκότων, καὶ 'ἃ αὐτοὶ ἑωράκαμεν τοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς ἡμῶν, ἃ ἐθεασάμεθα καὶ αἱ χεῖρες ἡμῶν ἐψηλάφησαν', ταῦτα διὰ τῆς αὐτοῦ συνάρσεως 'ἀπαγγελοῦμεν ὑμῖν'* [. . .]. See also *Dem*. 14–145 and 14.150 in Lemerle, *Démétrius*, I, 151, 154.

[138] *Dem*. 1.24 in Lemerle, *Démétrius*, vol. I, 67: *Εἰ δέ τις ψευδῆ με λέγειν ὑποτοπάζοι, ἱστορείτω τὴν ἐκ μουσείου συντεθειμένην ἐκεῖσεγραφὴν ἔξω τοῦ ναοῦ πρὸς τὸν ἀφορῶντα τοῖχον ἐπὶ τὸ τῆς πόλεως στάδιον, καὶ πληροφορηθεὶς πιστεύσει τοῖς προειρημένοις.*

[139] *Dem*. 9.75 in Lemerle, *Démétrius*, I, 107: *Ἀλλὰ ναὶ φῂς τὸ πρᾶγμα γεγενῆσθαι; Φαμέν, οὐ γὰρ ἅπερ ὀφθαλμοῖς εἴδομεν δυνάμεθα μὴ ὁμολογεῖν.*

[140] *Dem*. 12.101 in Lemerle, *Démétrius*, I, 125: *ὡς μὴ κόπου μοι δεῖν περὶ τὴν πειθὼ τῶν ἀκουόντων ὑμῶν—θεαταὶ γὰρ τούτων οἱ πλεῖστοι γεγόνατε* [. . .]. See also *Dem*. 3.29 (Lemerle, *Démétrius*, I, 75–6) where John prefaced his tale of Demetrius's deliverance of Thessalonica from the plague by insisting that his audience had their own proof for the miracle's authenticity, namely their own salvation.

> If one considers the matters at hand piously and with the mind of one obedient to God and closely examines the actions of the sick who took refuge at that time in his shrine, it will be found that both those who

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[141] *Dem.* 12.100 in Lemerle, *Démétrius*, I, 124: *εἰ καὶ ὅτι κόρος τῶν θείων διηγημάτων οὐδεὶς τοῖς ἐχέφροσι, διὰ τὸ μᾶλλον τὴν δίψαν τοῦ ἡγεμονικοῦ διακαίεσθαι τῶν χανδὸν δι' ἀκοῆς τὰ τοιαῦτα ἐκπεπωκότων· πλὴν καὶ τοῦ μή τινων τὴν ἀπιστίαν ἐξαμαρτάνειν φειδόμενοι* [. . .].

[142] Dagron (1981*b*) 89: 'ce choc frontal [. . .] entre deux savoirs et deux causalités différentes'. On co-existing, but conflicting mentalities in other societies, see further Tambiah (1990) 92–103; Lloyd (1990) 42 ff.; and cf. Geertz (1993).

[143] Haldon (1997*a*) 51. See also Dagron (1981*b*) 87: 'Byzance est aristotélicienne par tradition scolaire, chrétienne, par culture [. . .]. [. . .] elle doit s'arranger des contradictions de ses multiples héritages'.

[144] Cormack (1985) 65.

> were quickly released from the disease were healed and those who were swept away by it were fittingly punished in an entirely beneficial way and as part of divine providence.[145]

Doubtless, many in John's audience took cold comfort from this account. Indeed, they seem to have proposed an alternative, rationalistic explanation that effectively understood the different fate of those who took refuge at the shrine as the result of nothing more than random chance (ἐκ τοῦ παρατυχόντος), unconcerned with any moral judgement that God, or Demetrius, may have made. Naturally, perhaps, the archbishop perceived that such a notion was hostile to the concept of divine providence and denounced it as 'atheist' (τῶν ἀθέων).[146] Thus, when John reported a further apparition of Demetrius, he explicitly affirmed that God's purpose in this was 'that we might all believe that everything happens as if by divine providence and to root out from the bottom of our hearts the notion that any good thing can come into being out of random chance (ἐξ αὐτομάτου γίνεται), as the foolish believe'.[147]

A similar clash of aetiologies emerged when members of John's audience offered an explanation that discounted any intervention of Demetrius in the city's salvation from a famine that struck shortly after the outbreak of plague, in 586. While John was certain that the famine was averted because the saint sent to Thessalonica ships loaded with foodstuffs and other supplies, others objected that there were explanations that did not involve invoking Demetrius. Indeed, they claimed, such explanations seemed closer to the 'facts'. 'How can we be sure that these things took place through the foresight of the martyr', they asked, 'given that among all of the sailors who were looking on at that time none experienced an appropriate vision of the martyr?'[148] John's first appeal was that the fact of the miracle was evidence enough of Demetrius's involvement. But he also alleged that an imperial official on Chios *did* have a dream in which a voice informed him that a certain Demetrius was turning all ships away from the capital to Thessalonica. To the official, this 'Demetrius' could only be a deputy of the eparch's. When the eparch later revealed, however, that there was nobody in his employment named Demetrius, John, by a process of logical deduction, believed that the saint had been vindicated as the mysterious agent of Thessalonica's salvation. As in the case of the earlier miracle story concerning the plague, John was appropriating for Demetrius the responsibility for a fortuitous outcome of certain events in Thessalonica's history, ostensibly based upon little more than his own distinctive view of the saints' ongoing activity from heaven in the world here below. Indeed, there is every sense in the *Miracles* that Demetrius's cult could actually serve local, factional interests by enhancing the authority of the archbishops who had come to monopolize access to the saints' shrine. Thus, when the eparch announced a plan to carry out an unspecified public work, Thessalonica's leading citizens replied that Demetrius would not permit it.[149] The eparch answered sarcastically that the local saint must have been in league with the city against him! What is interesting is that other inhabitants of the city consistently contested both Demetrius's benefactions and, we can only imagine, the authority and prestige John and his successors derived from them.

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[145] *Dem.* 3.40 in Lemerle, *Démétrius*, I, 79: Ἀλλὰ μή τις ἀδυναμίας ἢ ἀσπλαγχνίας ἢ προσωποληψίας ἀσεβῶς τοῦ ἐπισκεψαμένου καταψηφίσηται μάρτυρος. Τῶν δὲ τηνικαῦτα πασχόντων καὶ τῷ τούτου ναῷ προσφευγόντων τὰς πράξεις ἀναθρήσας τῷ νῷ, καὶ τὰ προσήκοντα καὶ ἁρμόδια δούλῳ γνησίῳ θεοῦ φιλευσεβῶς λογισάμενος, εὑρήσει πάντως ἐπωφελῶς καὶ ὡς προνοίᾳ πρέπει θεοῦ καὶ τοὺς εὐθὺς ἐλευθερωθέντας τῶν νοσημάτων ὑγιασθῆναι, καὶ τοὺς παρασυρένταςἐν τούτοις οἰκονομικῶς παιδευθῆναι [. . .].

[146] ibid., in Lemerle, *Démétrius*, 80. Cf. Déroche (1993) 106–7.

[147] *Dem.* 3.42 in Lemerle, *Démétrius*, I, 80:Ἵνα δὲ καὶ νῦν πιστωθῶμεν ἅπαντες ὡς προνοίᾳ θεοῦ τὰ πάντα διέπεται, καὶ οὐδὲν τῶν καλῶν ἐξ αὐτομάτου γίνεται, ὥς τινες ληρωδοῦσι, τὰς τοιαύτας τοῦ πονηροῦ ἐννοίας ἐκ πρέμνων αὐτῶν τῆς ἡμῶν καρδίας ὁ θεὸς ἐκκόψαι βουλόμενος [. . .].

But John incorrigibly reasserted Demetrius's personal activity on behalf of Thessalonica. On 22nd September 586, a massive army of Slavs and Avars besieged the city and its survival was naturally due, as John saw it, to Demetrius's guardianship. First, the enemy mistook a martyr's shrine (not Demetrius's) outside the city walls for Thessalonica itself, thus providing its inhabitants with an additional day to make preparations. Secondly, there was an apparition of the saint fighting among the soldiery. According to John, even the drops of blood were still visible in the stonework where Demetrius slew the first enemy soldier who scaled the walls. It was a 'wondrous miracle' which, he believed, would alone 'prove the martyr's surpassing power, his God-imitating benevelonce towards us and his incomparable solicitude for our city.'[150] A formal investigation by the authorities proved John's account of the event. 'So, let no one doubt', he said, 'that the successful outcome of the siege was due to the martyr alone' (*Μηδεὶς τοίνυν ἀπιστείτω μόνου τοῦ ἀθλοφόρου τὸ τοιοῦτο γεγονέναι κατόρθωμα*).[151] 'Who would doubt that [the deliverance of the city] was not the act of divine intervention and the overshadowing protection of the saints?' John concluded.[152]

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[148] *Dem.* 9.75 in Lemerle, *Démétrius*, I, 107: *Πῶς δὲ πεισθῶμεν προνοίᾳ τοῦ ἀθλοφόρου ταῦτα γεγενῆσθαι, μηδενὸς τῶν τηνικαῦτα προσπλευσάντων ἐμπόρων ὀπτασίαν τινὰ παρὰ τοῦ μάρτυρος αὐτοῖς γεγενημένην ὁμολογήσαντος ἐπὶ τῷ τὰ ἐνθάδε καταλαβεῖν; Ἀλλ' εἰ καὶ μὴ τοῖς προσπλεύσασιν, ὡς ἔφης, ἐμπόροις τηλαυγῶς ὁ μάρτυς ἑαυτὸν ἐνεφάνισεν, ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις αὐτῶν νοητῶς συλλαλήσας θειοτέρᾳ ἐπισκιάσει πρὸς ἡμᾶς ἔπεισε στείλασθαι* [. . .].

[149] See *Dem.* 11.97 in Lemerle, *Démétrius*, I, 117. Cf. Cormack (1985) 65. Skedros (1999) 115–20 passes over this tension.

Yet some of Thessalonica's citizens clearly did continue to harbour reservations about John's version of events and their aetiology, as the continuation of the narrative demonstrated. As John warmed once again to his theme of proving Demetrius's role in Thessalonica's rescue ('for who would say that the happy outcome was not the result of divine protection and assistance?'),[153] he argued that the very reason why the siege occured at all was so that through its miraculous issue, 'no one would doubt that it was not through the intercessions of the glorious martyr Demetrius alone, our city's master after God, that Christ our God delivered it from deepest Hades (*ᾅδου*).'[154] But those sceptical of Demetrius's contribution objected that there was no proof that the deliverance of the city was supernatural or that Demetrius was personally involved, and that, as we shall see, attributing the outcome of the siege to God and his martyr in this way made too little of what the citizens of the city had done to defend themselves. John was scandalized, not least because downplaying the role of the martyr undermined the larger discourse of providential assistance that John saw it as belonging to:

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[150] *Dem*. 13.116 in Lemerle, *Démétrius*, I, 133: *Τοῦτο γὰρ τὸ θαυμαστὸν καὶ ἀπιστοφανὲς καὶ μέγα διήγημα παραστήσει τηλαυγῶς* [. . .] *τοῦ ἀθλοφόρου τὴν ἀνυπέρβλητον δύναμιν, καὶ τὸ τῆς φιλανθρωπίας αὐτοῦ θεομίμητον, καὶ τὸ τῆς περὶ τὴν πόλιν κηδεμονίας ἀσύγκριτον.*

[151] *Dem*. 13.121 in Lemerle, *Démétrius*, I, 135.

[152] *Dem*. 13.121 in Lemerle, *Démétrius*, I, 135: *τίς ἂν ἀμφιβάλοι μὴ θείας εἶναι ῥοπῆς καὶ ἁγίων ἐπισκιάσεως ἐνέργειαν;*

[153] *Dem*. 14.136 in Lemerle, *Démétrius*, I, 147–8: *πῶς οὐ θεϊκῆς ἐπισκιάσεως εἴποι τις καὶ ἀντιλήψεως τὸ κατόρθωμα;*

[154] *Dem*. 14.135 in Lemerle, *Démétrius*, I, 147: *ἵνα μὴ διαμφιβάλλοι τις ὡς οὐχὶ πρεσβείαις τοῦ μετὰ θεὸν δεσπότου αὐτῆς, λέγω δὴ τοῦ πανενδόξου μάρτυρος Δημητρίου, μόνος ὁ Χριστὸς καὶ θεὸς ἡμῶν ἐρρύσατο αὐτὴν ἐξ ᾅδου κατωτάτου.* See also Lemerle, *Démétrius*, I, 152: *Σκοπὸς γάρ μοι μόνον παραστῆσαι τῇ φιλοθέῳ ἀκοῇ ὡς ἐκ θεοῦ καὶ οὐκ ἄλλοθεν ἡ σωτηρία τότε τῇ πόλει γεγένητο, καὶ διεγεῖραι τὰς διανοίας ἁπάντων πρὸς θείαν κατάνυξιν καὶ θεάρεστον ἐξομολόγησιν καὶ εὐχαριστίαν τοῦ ἀθλοφόρου διηνεκῆ.*

> Receiving the saint's intercessions, he who searches hearts hearkened to the sighing of the downtrodden and rained a shower of goodness upon the city. But perhaps you will say: 'Whence is this clear? Who saw God? Who heard the salvation of him who had promised to ensure that the city be showered with goodness?' [. . .] But who would doubt that our success was a divine act? [. . .] For I, if there were no other proof to hand of God's rescue of the city, I consider the city's deliverance itself enough to demonstrate reasonably that the city was saved by nothing other than God's assistance.[155]

No-one had seen God. But the most important evidence that the archbishop could adduce in support of his view that 'the hand of God alone through the intercessions of the saint saved the city at that time' (*ὥς χεὶρ μόνη θεοῦ ταῖς τοῦ ἀθλοφόρου πρεσβείαις τηνικαῦτα τὴν πόλιν ἐξέσωσεν*) was a vision of Demetrius himself.[156] On the last night of the siege, the enemy saw an enormous army of imperial soldiers coming out from the city, led by a man clad in white and riding a horse. Since no such army existed in Thessalonica, the man on the horse could only have been the saint himself. Indeed, John believed that this 'apparition of the saint fighting on behalf of the city ought to force even the most incredulous into approval of this affair and praise of the martyr'.[157] Predictably, however, John's description of the saint's apparition did not prove to be the 'cast-iron' proof John had imagined it to be and his account of his audience's reaction offers an insight into how far the causation of phenomena hailed by some as 'miracles' was contested in early Byzantium, and how far a hagiographical discourse that sought to attribute all, or as much as possible, to divine providence and the saints could provoke dissenting accounts of the same event:

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[155] *Dem.* 14.142–4 in Lemerle, *Démétrius*, vol. 1, pp. 150–1: *Ὁ δὲ ἐρευνῶν τὰς καρδίας ἐπήκουσε τοῦ στεναγμοῦ τῶν πεπεδημένων, καὶ τὰς ἱκεσίας τοῦ ἀθλοφόρου δεξάμενος, ἐπώμβρησε τῇ πόλει ὑετὸν ἀγαθότητος. Ἀλλ' ἴσως ἐρεῖς· Πόθεν δῆλον; τίς εἶδε θεόν; ἢ τίς ἤκουσεν αὐτοῦ τὴν σωτηρίαν ὑποσχομένου, ὅτι διαβεβαιοῦσαι τὴν πόλιν ὑετισθῆναι τῇ ἀγαθότητι;* [. . .] *ἄρα τίς ἀμφιβάλλοι μὴ θεϊκῆς ἐνεργείας εἶναι κατόρθωμα* [. . .]. *Ἐγὼ μὲν οὖν, εἰ καὶ μηδὲν ἄλλο παρῆν μοι προφέρειν ἔνδειγμα τῆς ἐκ θεοῦ τότε γενομένης τῇ πόλει ῥοπῆς, ἀρκεῖν ἡγοῦμαι τοῖς εὐγνωμόνως κρίνουσι ταῦτα δεικνύναι μὴ ἄλλοθεν ἢ θεοῦ συμμαχίᾳ τὴν πόλιν τότε διασεσῶσθαι.*

[156] *Dem.* 14.145 in Lemerle, *Démétrius*, I, 151.

[157] *Dem.* 14.156 in Lemerle, *Démétrius*, I, 156: *τὴν αὐτοφανῆ τοῦ ἀθλοφόρου συμμαχίαν γεγενημένην ἐκτίθημι, τὴν καὶ τοὺς λίαν ἀπίστους εἰς τὴν τοῦ πράγματος συγκατάθεσιν καὶ δοξολογίαν τοῦ μάρτυρος συνελάσαι ὀφείλουσαν* [. . .].

> But concerning these things some will perhaps ignorantly allege that, although he [John] intended to exalt the city, a great reproach has befallen her. He has said that the city accomplished nothing out of native, human pride during its oppression. On the contrary, he has determined to ascribe its complete salvation to the will of God.
>
> 'So be it', some say, 'that the city was saved and emerged victorius through God. But what about the martyr? He continually recounts the triumphs performed by the "all-glorious" and "God-crowned" Demetrius through his apparitions: but how has he convinced us that the saint himself interceded for the city before God at that time?'[158]

A scathing rejection of their archbishop's version of events and the benefactions of the martyr for their city, in the end there was little more John could do than reiterate his story of Demetrius's apparition during the siege and the barbarians' sudden flight.

In John of Thessalonica's *Miracles of Demetrius*, it is possible to see just how far hagiographers sought in the early seventh century to integrate the saints and their miracles into a wider providential view of the universe and its operations, and how threatening they found alternative aetiological systems to be. Inasmuch as its citizens appear regularly to have rejected Archbishop John's account of the benefactions of its sainted patron, the contested situation at Thessalonica concerning Demetrius's role in the city's affairs indirectly rejoins the controversy about the saints' miracles that appeared in Eustratius and Gregory's writings. Even in a provincial town on the threshold of the Byzantine 'dark ages', subscription to the notion of the saints' direct intervention in secular affairs was not automatic, especially when other explanations were as, or even more, compelling. On the contrary, the *Miracles of Demetrius* reveal that stories of the saints' miracles emerged at Thessalonica during the early seventh century through the interplay of doubt and dissent, including the public contestation of the claims made by the city's archbishop.

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[158] *Dem.* 14.164 in Lemerle, *Démétrius*, vol. 1, p. 158: Ἀλλ' ἐπεὶ πρὸς ταῦτά τινες ἴσως ἐξ ἀμαθίας ἐπισκήπτουσι λέγοντες ὡς· Ὑψῶσαι τὴν πόλιν προθέμενος, ὄνειδος αὐτῇ οὐκ ὀλίγον κατέχεας, μηδὲν ἐξ οἰκείας αὐτῆς φρονήσεως ἢ ἀνδρείας εἰρηκὼς αὐτὴν περὶ τὴν πολιορκίαν ἐργάσασθαι, ἀλλὰ τὸ πᾶν τῆς σωτηρίας θείῳ νεύματι περαιωθῆναι διαγραψάμενος [. . .]. Ἔστω, φησί, διὰ τοῦ θεοῦ νενίκηκεν ἡ πόλις καὶ διασέσωσται. Τί οὖν πρὸς τὸν μάρτυρα; τοὖπανενδόξου γὰρ καὶ θεοστεφοῦς Δημητρίου διηγεῖσθαι προέθου τὰ δι' ἐπισκιάσεων κατορθώματα· πόθεν δὲ πείθεις ἡμᾶς ὡς αὐτὸς ὑπὲρ τῆς πόλεως πρὸς θεὸν τηνικαῦτα ἐπρέσβευσεν.

THE *LIFE OF ST SYMEON THE YOUNGER*

The *Life of St Symeon the Younger* provides the historian with the collected miracles of a saint whose reported miracles seem to have aroused widespread controversy during and after his lifetime.[159] Born in the region of Antioch *circa* 521, Symeon apparently began life as a stylite at the age of six. Relocating around 548 to the 'Wondrous Mountain' some seventeen kilometres from the provincial capital on the Orontes, Symeon inspired a wide following and both a monastery and a pilgrims' hospice sprang up at the foot of his column.[160] As we have seen, during the final quarter-century of his life, when his fame was doubtless at its height, Symeon, who died in 592, became entangled in a number of political intrigues involving the candidates for a handful of the highest-ranking imperial and ecclesiastical offices.[161] According to the disciple who gathered together the diverse tales of Symeon's miracles, following the demise of Emperor Justinian in 565 Symeon prophesied the accession of Justin II (565–78). Indeed, he claimed that the new emperor harboured a special affection for the pillar saint, who, it was also alleged, healed Justin's daughter from a threatening illness and warned in vain against the remedies of a 'Jewish magician' whom the emperor viewed as the solution to medical problems of his own.[162] Symeon also prophesied the elections of John the Scholastic (565–77) and Anastasius I (559–70, 593–8) as patriarchs of Constantinople and Antioch, respectively. Nor was knowledge of these prophecies restricted to a small coterie of Symeon's disciples. In his *Ecclesiastical History*, Evagrius Scholasticus reported Symeon's successful foretelling of the accession of Emperor Maurice (582–602) and the election of Patriarch Gregory I (570–92) of Antioch.[163] Evagrius's close connections with Symeon are attested elsewhere in the saint's Life, but the rumour of Symeon's remarkable prophecies seem to have been sufficiently well known to have aroused Eustratius of Constantinople to attribute a similar array of prophetic miracles to his patron, Eutychius of Ameseia, who as deposed patriarch of the capital, was John the Scholastic's bitter rival until the latter's death (and Eutychius's restoration to the see) in 577.[164] Moreover, it was suggested in the first chapter of this study that these competing reports of prominent and politically *engagé* saintly prophecies circulating back and forth between the provinces of the empire and its capital potentially served to prompt the reservations about this kind of miracle that Gregory addressed in his second dialogue, or *Life of Benedict*.[165] Indeed, just as we have seen that Benedict foretold the ruin of Rome and the destruction of his monastery at Monte Cassino by the Lombards in 577, so, according to his hagiographer, Symeon foresaw the sack of Antioch by the Persians in 540 as well as an earthquake that partially ruined a section of the imperial capital at Constantinople.[166] Yet it is also significant that the *Life of Symeon the Younger* included accounts not only of those prophecies of Symeon's that came to pass, but also of a number of occasions in which Symeon's special powers appear to have failed him.[167]

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[159] See van den Ven, *Vie ancienne*, I, 163–4.

[160] On the monastery and the site, see above all Lafontaine-Dosogne (1967) 67–135.

[161] See van den Ven (1965).

[162] *Life of St Symeon the Younger*, cc. 202–11.

In its current form put together during the reign of Phocas (602–10), the account that has come to us of Symeon more closely resembles a collection of the saint's miracles than a conventional Life.[168] Several of Symeon's reported miracles recall those found in Gregory's *Dialogues*, a fact which is at least worth noting, given the close chronological production of the two texts. Like Benedict in the second dialogue, Symeon was adept at detecting the misdeeds others committed out of sight, including the attempt by one of his disciples to receive money from a sick man in return for Symeon's healing.[169] Elsewhere Symeon was described as designating the site where his disciples should establish their monastery as the result of a vision he received from God. When that site proved to be deficient in water, he instructed his disciples to spread lime and broken stone on the ground. After Symeon prayed over the mixture, it rained.[170] Like Benedict (and, as we have seen, Eustratius's patron, Eutychius), Symeon was reported to have raised a dead child with his prayers.[171] On another occasion, he, like Benedict, was held responsible for the rescue of a drowning child who called on the saint's name, while on another a drowning man reported enjoying a vision of the saint pulling him from the waters.[172] Moreover, just as Benedict effected the retrieval of the blade of a disciple's scythe that had fallen into a lake, so Symeon was credited with enabling a man who had dropped a bag of gold into the Orontes to get it back by telling him where along the course of the river he should lower his hand into the water.[173] Finally, recalling Benedict's miraculous multiplication of oil for his disciples during a famine in the Roman Campania, Symeon brought about the provisioning of his monastery for three years by praying over the grain collected in the store house during a time of scarcity.[174] As we shall see, Symeon equally aroused the jealousies of the local

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[163] Evagrius Scholasticus, *Ecclesiastical History* 5.21 (Maurice), 6.23 (Patriarch Gregory of Antioch), J. Bidez and L. Parmentier (eds.) (London, 1898), 217, 239 = Whitby, *The Ecclesiastical History of Evagrius Scholasticus* (Liverpool, 2000), 284, 315.

[164] See Eustratius of Constantinople, *V. Eutych* = CCG 25:1850–82 (Justin II); 25:1883–1893 (Tiberius II); 25:1900–45 (Maurice); and Cameron (1988) 240–1. On the connection between Evagrius's text and the Life, see Déroche further (1996) 74.

[165] See Chapter One of this book above, 52–4.

[166] *Life of St Symeon the Younger*, cc. 57, 106; cf. Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 2.15, 17. On another occasion, Symeon foretold that an earthquake would strike Antioch but assured his disciples that he had averted it through his prayers: *Life of St Symeon the Younger*, c. 78.

[167] See the *Life of St Symeon the Younger*, cc. 215–16; and cf. Deacon Peter's question in Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 2.21.3 (SC 260:198–200): *Dic, quaeso te: numquidnam credendum est huic Dei famulo semper prophetiae spiritum adesse potuisse, an per interualla temporum eius mentem prophetiae spiritus inplebat?*

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[168] Déroche (1996) 70–4. Indeed, Déroche argues convincingly that had the circumstances of Phocas's accession been different, the *Life* would surely have contained reports of Symeon's prophesying the accessions of Tiberius II and Maurice, too.

[169] *Life of St Symeon the Younger*, c. 93; cf. Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 2.18–19. See also the similar miracle in *Life of St Symeon the Younger*, cc. 169, 175.

[170] *Life of St Symeon the Younger*, c. 96–7; cf. Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 2.5.

[171] *Life of St Symeon the Younger*, c. 46; cf. Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 2.31–2 and Eustratius of Constantinople, *v. Eutych* = CCG 25:1398–99. See also Chapter One of this book above, 62–3.

[172] *Life of St Symeon the Younger*, cc. 149, 177; cf. Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 2.7.

[173] *Life of St Symeon the Younger*, c. 237; cf. Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 2.6.

[174] *Life of St Symeon the Younger*, c. 122; cf. Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 2.28–9. See also *Life of St Symeon the Younger*, c. 173.

Christian clergy, even as he, like his Italian counterpart, seemed to assume some of their sacramental prerogatives.[175]

In the light of the debate about the nature of the saint's apparitions reflected in Eustratius's *On the State of Souls*, it is also significant that, as a living saint like Benedict, Symeon was reported to have appeared on numerous occasions in apparitions to disciples or pilgrims. On one occasion, Symeon appeared to a man with a swollen stomach and held the Gospels to the man's belly, while on another he appeared to a man with problems of the feet.[176] On other occasions, he was seen far from his column on the Wondrous Mountain, as when he appeared to the Roman citizens who had been deported as prisoners of the Persians in 540, or in the houses of those who called on his name when the plague struck Antioch in 542.[177] As with Gregory's representation of the vision of Benedict which two of the saint's disciples beheld in the *Dialogues*, moreover, there can be little doubt that what those who apprehended a vision of Symeon obtained was an apparition of the saint's own subjective presence, or 'soul', itself (and certainly not of an angel that might have assumed Symeon's appearance).[178] In one tale, a man under attack from demons as he was climbing a tree had a vision of Symeon who arrived and cast them into the abyss. Remarkably, news of this miracle reached Symeon's monastery even before the messengers arrived to report it: the saint, who had never left his column, had told them first.[179] A miracle story involving one of the saint's distinctive pilgrims' tokens (*eulogiai*) made the saint's subjective presence in his apparitions even clearer. When a boy fell ill, his father, a priest, carried him to Symeon's column and laid him before the saint. Symeon instructed the priest to take away one of his *eulogiai* from the shrine that bore an image of Symeon and return home. 'Take this token made of dust from my shrine', Symeon advised, 'return home, and when you see the imprint of our form, it is we that you see.'[180] That night the priest beheld a vision of the saint and the boy was healed. The anonymous author of the story clearly aimed to underline Symeon's real presence in his apparitions, a presence which the correspondence between the saint's appearance in the apparition and his representation on the pilgrims' token was thought to confirm. Indeed, the extant examples of Symeon's *eulogiai* depict a disciple bearing incense to the saint and a pilgrim kneeling in supplication to him at the foot of the column. Some are even inscribed with prayers, which effectively encouraged their owners to address their requests to the presence of the saint in the token, apparently in the hope of an apparition or some other miraculous intervention by Symeon.[181]

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[175] *Life of St Symeon the Younger*, cc. 239, 133; cf. Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 2.8, 2.23.

[176] *Life of St Symeon the Younger*, cc. 54, 81. See also c. 82 where Symeon healed a woman by the same means.

[177] *Life of St Symeon the Younger*, cc. 61, 69.

[178] Cf. Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 2.22. See also Chapter One of this book above, 66–71.

[179] *Life of St Symeon the Younger*, c. 91. See also the similar miracle in c. 170.

Symeon's hagiographer was also careful to delineate the saint's prerogatives from those of the angels and the obedience of the latter to his intercessions was powerfully displayed when the crowds gathered at his column beheld the following apparition:

> And three angels of the Lord appeared, one on Symeon's right, another on his left and a third standing behind him, who held in their hands reed pens that shone as bright as gold and as the saint spoke they wrote down the name of each of those who would receive healing as if on parchment whiter than snow.[182]

Potentially rejoining the debates we have already seen, the author of the tale added that the three angels 'appeared to many in their own forms and not as if in a dream' (*οἰ φαινόμενοι πολλοῖς ἐν εἴδει οὐκ ἐν ὁραμάτι*).[183] As the angels departed for heaven, they reassured the saint that 'God has increased his power in you and granted you great favour' (*Νῦν ηὔξησεν ὁ Θεὸς τὴν ἑαυτοῦ δύναμιν ἐν σοὶ καὶ χάριν ἐδωρήσατό σοι πολλήν*). Indeed, shortly thereafter Symeon had a vision of himself crowned with a diadem and seated astride a white horse.[184]

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[180] *Life of St Symeon the Younger*, c. 231, in van den Ven, *Vie ancienne*, I, 206: *Λαβὼν οὖν τῆς κόνεώς μου τὴν εὐλογίαν, ἀπότρεχε καὶ ἐν τῇ σφραγῖδι τοῦ τύπου ἡμῶνβλέπων ἐκεῖνο βλέπεις ἡμᾶς*. See also cc. 162, 163, 232, 235.

[181] Vikan (1982) 29–31, 32–3. It has been argued that the story is an interpolation, but the *eulogiai* seem on the contrary to support its authenticity. See Déroche (1996) 80–3; *contra* Speck (1991) 183–8.

[182] *Life of St Symeon the Younger*, c. 40, in van den Ven, *Vie ancienne*, I, 39: *Καί ὤφθησαν τρεῖς ἄγγελοι Κυρίου, εἶς ἐκ δεξιῶν καὶ ἄλλος ἐξ εὐωνύμων καὶ ὁ τρίτος ὀπίσω Συμεὼν ἱστάμενοι καὶ κατέχοντες καλαμάρια χρυσαυγάζοντα καὶ ἕκαστον τῶν μελλόντων λαμβάνειν τὴν ἴασιν ἔγραφον τοῦ ἁγίου λέγοντος ὡς ἐν σωματίῳ λευκῷ ὑπὲρ χιόνα.*

[183] *Life of St Symeon the Younger*, c. 41, in van den Ven, *Vie ancienne*, I, 40.

Despite (or indeed perhaps because of) this vivid insistence upon Symeon's personal deposit of divine, miracle-working charisma, reports of the saint's thaumaturgy seem to have provoked as much incredulity as Benedict's, and even more open hostility.[185] In fact, the Life abounds in stories that focused on figures that doubted in or contested the saint's miracles. Describing the saint's success in putting an end to the series of earthquakes that shook the region, his hagiographer besought his audience: 'Let nobody disbelieve or doubt the fact that the all holy Spirit of God had taught him to do these things; rather, let everyone, receiving with faith and holding fast to them, praise God with us for all of the glorious deeds that took place through his servant, Symeon.'[186] Those who disputed the saint's miracles came from a wide cross-section of Antiochene society that included clerics and monks at the saint's own monastery—and one, in particular, named Angoulas, was a notorious gainsayer of his wonders.[187] For the local Christian clergy, Symeon was often perceived as a rival and as such they duly questioned the miracles of healing he purportedly performed.[188] His hagiographer reported the mixed reception his wonders could provoke even among the pilgrims in attendance at the shrine:

> All those who were watching were astonished, and some said, 'The power of God is in him', but those who took offence said, 'How did he obtain the ability to do these things?' The saint replied: 'I am [. . .] the servant of the Son of God [. . .] and I do these things in his name and through the power of his Cross. [. . .] As for what you are thinking, may God forgive you. For, you are not blaspheming against me, but against the Lord through whose power these things come to pass.' When they heard this, those who opposed him withdrew ashamed.[189]

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[184] *Life of St Symeon the Younger*, c. 47.

[185] Déroche (1996) 78–80.

[186] *Life of St Symeon the Younger*, c. 107, in van den Ven, *Vie ancienne*, I, 87–8: *Μηδεὶς οὖν ἀπιστείτω μηδὲ ἀμφιβαλλέτω ταῦτα αὐτὸν ἐκδιδάξαι τὸ κύριον καὶ πανάγιον πνεῦμα, ἀλλὰ πιστῶς δεχόμενος καὶ βεβαίως κατέχων σὺν ἡμῖν δοξάσῃ τὸν Θεὸν ἐπὶ πᾶσι τοῖς ἐνδόξοις τοῖς γινομένοις διὰ τοῦ ἁγίου αὐτοῦ θεράποντος Συμεών.*

[187] *Life of St Symeon the Younger*, c. 168. See also c. 123. Cf. Déroche (1996) 74–5.

[188] *Life of St Symeon the Younger*, cc. 92, 116, 195, 225, 239.

[189] *Life of St Symeon the Younger*, c. 90, in van den Ven, *Vie ancienne*, I, 70–1: *Πάντες οὖν οἱ θεωροῦντες ἐξεπλήσσοντο, καὶ οἱ μὲν ἔλεγον: ʽΘεοῦ δύναμίς ἐστιν ἐν*

Elsewhere, it was said that Satan drove the brothers in Symeon's monastery, the pilgrims at the shrine and the headmen of the local villages together in opposition to the saint.[190] Those apparently unpersuaded of the economy of Providence also manifested their hostility and we are told that, on one occasion, the astrologers, the Manichees, and (in a situation that would corroborate the one we have already observed in Demetrius's Thessalonica) 'those who believed that everything happened by chance' (νομίζοντες εἶναι τὰ πάντα αὐτοματισμὸν ἐφαντάζοντο) of Antioch combined to contest the miracles of Symeon that were being reported in the city.[191] Indeed, Symeon's hagiographer suggested that it was in response to the saints' prayers that the emperor appointed a governor for the region who violently persecuted those who did not adhere to the empire's official religion and its Providential economy.[192]

But the *Life of St Syemon the Younger* also appears to offer a glimpse of the spirit of Eustratius's rationalist opponents in the provinces. In a narrative significant for the evidence it provides for rationalist-inspired criticism of the saints' miracles in early Byzantine society, we learn that when Anastasius, a scholasticus at Antioch, was

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αὐτῷ', οἱ δὲ ἐσκανδαλίζοντο λέγοντες· 'Πόθεν τούτῳ ἀπὸ τοιαύτης ἕξεως τοιαῦτα ποιεῖν;' Αὐτὸς δὲ ἔλεγεν: ἐγὼ μὲν γὰρ ἄνθρωπός εἰμι ἁμαρτωλός, δοῦλος δὲ τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ Θεοῦ [. . .], καὶ ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι αὐτοῦ καὶ τῇ δυνάμει τοῦ σταυροῦ αὐτοῦ ταῦτα ποιῶ. [. . .] Περὶ δὲ ὧν ἐνθυμεῖσθε ὁ Θεὸς ὑμῖν συγχωρήσῃ· οὐ γὰρ κατ' ἐμοῦ ἐδυσφημήσατε, ἀλλὰ κατὰ τοῦ Κυρίου οὗ τῇ δυνάμει ταῦτα γίνεται.' Τούτων ἀκούοντες τῶν ῥημάτων οἱ ἐναντίοι ἀνεχώρουν καταισχυνόμενοι.

[190] *Life of St Symeon the Younger*, c. 125. See also *Life of St Symeon the Younger*, cc. 183, 193, 194, 214, 234, 251.

[191] *Life of St Symeon the Younger*, c. 157. On the nature of their 'paganism', see Déroche (1996) 76–8. Sophronius, too, presented astrology as a source of opposition to the saints' miracles and recounted the corrective discipline the saints meted out to one Nemesius who 'stripped [God] of providence over his creatures as far as possible' and 'attributed it to the movement of the stars': *CyrJoh* 28 in Fernandez-Marcos, *Thaumata*, 28.12–19 (Gascou, *Sophrone*, 93). On astrology and astral predetermination in contemporary East Roman society, see Wolska-Conus (1989) and Magdalino (2006) esp. 10–11, 33 ff., who reveals Emperor Heraclius's activity in promoting the complementarity of Christian and astrological 'sciences'. Indeed, the incompatibility of astrology with Christianity was still being asserted *circa* 680 by Anastasius of Sinai who took a firm line against astral predetermination in his *Questions and Answers*: Anastasius of Sinai, *Qu. and Ans.* 88[16] and 96[28] = CCG 59: 23–7, 56–76.

[192] *Life of St Symeon the Younger*, cc. 160–1. This was Amantius who in 555 was charged by Justinian with suppressing the Samaritan revolt in Palestine. His campaign against the non-conforming inhabitants of Antioch took place in 555–6: Van den Ven, *Vie Ancienne*, II, 167–8 n.1. See also *Life of St Symeon the Younger*, cc. 78, 141, 158, 184, 188, 190, 221, 223, 231.

apprised of the miracles that were being reported of Symeon, he refused to believe in them as the doings of the saint in a way that strongly recalled the arguments of Eustratius's opponents in the capital:

> From the great city of Antioch there was a scholasticus named Anastasius, an unbeliever and a blasphemer, who did not cease reviling and casting aspersions on the true servant of God. He even dared to say that, manifestly, God did not perform healings through him.[193]

According to Symeon's hagiographer, Anastasius the Scholastic's views were widely reported and eventually provoked the ire of the saint himself, whose subsequent curses brought about Anastasius's rapid demise. Although we do not know whether Anastasius attributed Symeon's miracles to an independent divine or angelic force operating through Symeon, the merely passive role he believed Symeon exercised in his miracles has been compared to the similar view which Anastasius of Sinai expressed at the end of the seventh century in his *Questions and Answers*.[194] But it seems more compelling to connect them to the debate about the saints' miracles being pursued during the final years of Symeon's ministry in Eustratius's Constantinople, and in all likelihood still current in the capital during the reign of Phocas when Symeon's disciple assembled the Life of the pillar saint.

Despite being the record of the miracles of a living saint, the *Life of Symeon the Younger* was equally committed to the ongoing posthumous activity of the souls of deceased saints. Indeed, the miracles performed by saints of this kind frame the intervening narratives like bookends at the beginning and end of the Life. Thus, Symeon's mother learnt of the saint's conception through an apparition of St John the Baptist, one which the woman received as a result of her having incubated in the saint's shrine at Antioch.[195] This first apparition was followed by two further visions of the Forerunner at the outset of Symeon's precocious career.[196] The nature of his hagiographer's understanding of the location of the saints' disembodied souls *post mortem* was later confirmed, when, mid-career, Symeon was vouchsafed a vision of the soul of the recently deceased Patriarch Ephrem of Antioch (527–45) that appeared to the saint at the Wondrous Mountain before ascending to heaven in 545.[197] Indeed, this tale bears comparison with Gregory's story of Benedict's vision of the ascent to heaven of the soul of Bishop Germanus of Capua in 541.[198] Finally, at the conclusion of Symeon's career, the author of the Life announced his confidence in the saint's ongoing benefactions from heaven for his disciples and supplicants here below. When, towards the end of his life, Symeon foresaw his forthcoming death, he prophesied the scandals that Angoulas, the renegade monk who disputed Symeon's authority and the authenticity of his miracles, would bring upon the monastery. Significantly, however, as an expression of Symeon's ongoing posthumous activity, the saint and his disciples were comforted by the words of a monk named Antony. 'Do not grieve, father', he said, 'for you will watch over this place better after you have left it and gone to God.'[199] Another, called Gregory, concurred and, the text says, 'the saint accepted their words' (*καὶ παρεδέχετο ὁ ἅγιος τοὺς λόγους αὐτῶν*). Indeed, although he apparently did not possess any actual tomb miracles to recount (if he did, he left them in silence), Symeon's anonymous hagiographer affirmed that 'having gone to the Lord and living after death (*μετὰ θάνατον ζῶν*) like an ever-flowing spring, he flows forth in healings through his precious relics, bounteously answering the requests of those who come with faith.'[200]

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[193] *Life of St Symeon the Younger*, c. 224, in van den Ven, *Vie ancienne*, I, 194: Σκολαστικός τις τῆς Ἀντιοχέων ὁρμώμενος μεγαλοπόλεως, ὄνομα δὲ τούτῳ Ἀναστάσιος, ἄπιστος ὑπάρχων καὶ βλάσφημος, οὐκ ἐπαύετο πολλὰ μὲν καταλαλῶν καὶ λοιδορῶν τὸν ἀληθῶς δοῦλον τοῦ Θεοῦ, τολμῶν δὲ λέγειν προφαντῶς μὴ ἐνεργεῖν δι' αὐτοῦ τὸν Θεὸν τὰς ἰάσεις.

[194] Déroche (1996) 79 n. 74.

[195] *Life of St Symeon the Younger*, c. 2.

Finally, it has been noted before that Symeon's Life stands out in the corpus of late antique hagiography for the important role that the sacraments of the church play in it.[201] Having been earlier ordained as a deacon, Symeon was ultimately elevated to the priesthood by the hand of God himself and his hagiographer likened the saint to Melchizedek (Gn 14.18, Heb 7.11) and St Peter the Apostle, the two founding figures of the Christian priesthood found in Scripture. The canonical regularity of this extraordinary ordination was later confirmed by the arrival of a bishop.[202] We have already seen the manner in which Eustratius's apology for the saints' ongoing psychological activity *post mortem* also led him to a defence of the efficacy of the church's ritual care for the dead through the offering of the Eucharist, while Gregory the Great, who also perceived the connection, developed a vision of the saints and their miracles that stressed the sacramental character of the latter as the fruit of the incarnation and God's in-dwelling presence in the saints. Moreover, it was argued that it was Gregory's view of the priestly character of sainthood that allowed him to present Benedict as effectively obtaining the posthumous absolution of the souls of two impenitent nuns.[203] For Symeon's hagiographer, too, the vocations of saint and priest clearly overlapped and in a sign of the fundamentally sacramental character of the hagiographer's view of the saint's ministry, he described how, in a subsequent vision, Symeon had seen the Eucharist being offered, in the company of thousands of angels, in the heavenly throne room. 'From then on the saint offered the oblation with confidence and celebrated the holy mysteries, glorifying the God who is glorified in the counsels of his saints, for God has magnified his saints on the earth, as, according to the words of Blessed David, "all of his desires are in them" (Ps. 15.3)'.[204] With Symeon's body itself acquiring in the text the same character as the Eucharistic host itself, it is unsurprising that his hagiographer related a story that recalled, with a twist, Gregory's tale of the imprisoned soldier set free from his chains through his wife's faithful remembrance of his name at the Eucharist. In the *Life of Symeon*, however, a soldier held captive in Persia obtained the same result merely by pronouncing the saint's name.[205]

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[196] *Life of St Symeon the Younger*, cc. 3, 7.

[197] *Life of St Symeon the Younger*, c. 71.

[198] See Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 2.35. See Chapter One above, 74.

[199] *Life of St Symeon the Younger*, c. 240 in van den Ven, *Vie ancienne*, I, 216: *Μὴ λυποῦ, πάτερ· πλειόνως γὰρ προΐστασαι τοῦ τόπου ἀπερχόμενος πρὸς τὸν Θεόν.*

[200] *Life of St Symeon the Younger*, c. 258 in van den Ven, *Vie ancienne*, I, 223: *ὅς μεταστάς πρὸς τὸν Κύριον καὶ μετὰ θάνατον ζῶν ὥσπερ ἀενναος πηγὴ βρύει τὰ ἰάματα διὰ τοῦ τιμίου αὐτοῦ λειψάνου παρέχων τοῖς πιστῶς προσερχομένοις ἀφθόνως αἰτήματα.*

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[201] See esp. Ashbrook Harvey (1998) 537: 'Simeon the Younger exercised his priestly office specifically as a liturgical one from his pillar, relocating the ecclesial community into himself as centre.'

[202] *Life of St Symeon the Younger*, c. 133–4.

[203] See Chapter One of this book above, 55–7. A story from the *Life of Symeon* bears striking resemblance to this. When, before Symeon's ordination to the priesthood, a member of the local clergy cursed the saint and fell ill, Symeon then sent him a piece of consecrated bread which the priest venerated. He then died immediately but, the text tells us, 'in a state of grace': *Life of St Symeon the Younger*, c. 116. Before his ordination, Symeon had already distributed the host to his mother: *Life of St Symeon the Younger*, c. 105.

[204] *Life of St Symeon the Younger*, c. 135 in van den Ven, *Vie ancienne*, I, 127: *Ἔκτοτε οὖν μετὰ πάσης πληροφορίας δι᾽ αὐτῆς προσέφερεν ὁ ἅγιος καὶ τὴν θείαν ἐπετέλει μυσταγωγίαν, δοξάζων τὸν Θεὸν τὸν ἐνδοξαζόμενον ἐν βουλῇ ἁγίων αὐτοῦ,*

These analogies between the Lives of Symeon and Benedict throw into relief how far Gregory's portrait of Italy's greatest ascetic father naturally flowed into the channels of ideal sanctity, and especially saintly thaumaturgy, which were apparently shared by ascetic communities across the late sixth-century *oikumene*.[206] But they also enable us to imagine how the second of Gregory's *Dialogues*, in particular, came into being as his attempt to think through the theological implications of the various traditions concerning Benedict's wondrous exploits handed down by the latter's disciples in the light of a debate about the cult of the saints and their miracles that contempories were pursuing at Constantinople, and indeed across the East Roman world.[207]

THE *LIFE OF THEODORE OF SYKEON*

The efficacy of the saints' posthumous intercession was also a recurring theme in the *Life of Theodore of Sykeon*. Theodore, the offspring of a casual liaison between an imperial agent and a prostitute from a minor staging village on the road between Constantinople and Ancyra, became a holy man renowned for his asceticism, the bishop of a provincial capital and finally an adviser to emperors (if we are to believe the testimony provided by his disciple and biographer, George).[208] Unusually for the Life of a living saint, the holy man of

διότι τοὺς ἁγίους αὐτοῦ τοὺς ἐν τῇ γῇ ἐθαυμάστωσεν, ὅτι πάντα, ὡς εἶπεν ὁ μακάριος Δαυείδ, τὰ θελήματα αὐτοῦ ἐν αὐτοῖς.

[205] *Life of St Symeon the Younger*, c. 62.

[206] See further Petersen (1984).

[207] On the origins of Gregory's Life, see further Leyser (2000*a*) 131–2.

[208] Otherwise unknown, it has been suggested that Sykeon should be identified with a site eighty kilometres west of Ankara (Ancyra): Rapp (2005) 161 n. 22; Mitchell (1993) II, 123–5. Mitchell demonstrates that despite the suggestion that his mother

Sykeon was said to benefit from the miraculous intervention of heavenly patrons throughout his *Life*.[209] In particular, the early fourth-century martyr, St George, is depicted as Theodore's special guardian from the very beginning of his career.[210] As a young man, for example, Theodore was exorcized by St George after having been attacked by a demon; indeed, the event also served to confer upon Theodore the power to perform this sort of miracle.[211] With the assistance of another early martyr, St Christopher, Theodore later exorcized a young boy.[212] On another occasion, a young wrestler with pain in his head, arms, and legs, came to the saint seeking healing. Theodore sent him home telling him to pay attention to his dreams. That night St George appeared and healed the wrestler.[213] Having fled to Jerusalem following his election as bishop, Theodore is constrained to return to his see and his monastery in Anatolia through an apparition of St George. Elsewhere, Theodore and George acted in concert to halt a woman's haemorrhage.[214] In fact, the Life suggests that incubation in the hope of an apparition of St George may occasionally have been practised in the chapel that Theodore dedicated to the saint at his monastery.[215] On another occasion (see further below), it was Saints Cosmas and Damian who came to Theodore's aid. But the close association between Theodore and George was stressed also at the time of the holy man's death. Shortly before this event, Theodore beheld a vision of the martyr who, seated on horseback, pulled behind him a second horse for Theodore himself.[216] Revealing the meaning of this apparition to the monks of his monastery, Theodore nevertheless urged them not to be dismayed for

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was a prostitute, Theodore's was clearly a family of some substance and property. His mother later married a leading citizen of Ancyra.

[209] Mitchell (1993), II, 134–6.

[210] See the several apparitions of St George to Theodore and his family in cc. 5–9 [Festugière]. Note that George is said to have at first assumed the appearance of one Stephen, the family's pious cook, before appearing 'in his own form' (*ἐν τῇ οἰκείᾳ ὁράσει*): *Theo.* 8 in Festugière, *Vie*, 7.

[211] *Theo.* 17 [Dawes and Baynes].

[212] *Theo.* 46 [Dawes and Baynes].

[213] *Theo.* 88 [Dawes and Baynes].

[214] *Theo.* 96 [Festugière]. Unlike Cosmas and Damian, Sts George and Christopher were military saints. See Walter (2003).

[215] *Theo.* 70 [Festugière].

[216] This apparition is evidence that in the seventh century St George was already depicted iconographically as a mounted warrior. Apparitions of saints on horseback were widely contested. See further below, 223–4.

not only George, but also he himself, would continue to see to the needs of the community from heaven.[217] Finally, Theodore is said to have died on the eve of the feast of George's martyrdom and his hagiographer's closing words bear witness to his strong sense of the saints' ongoing activity on behalf of the living from beyond the grave, an activity that now included Theodore himself. 'Displaying that he lives with the saints', Theodore's hagiographer affirmed, 'he shines in the midst of a host of splendid beings for the glory of the holy, consubstantial and life-giving Trinity, that magnifies *even after death* its true and holy worshippers.'[218]

The significance of this intervention by saints from beyond the grave in the *Life of Theodore* has perhaps not been fully appreciated, despite their unusual character in the biography of a living saint. On the contrary, it has been said that '[n]o one disputed the authority of these visions, or questioned them as the channel by which the divine will was transmitted to men. Dreams and apparitions were as real and substantial evidence for the presence of the saints as the countless churches which men had dedicated to them.'[219] Yet, *pace* Mitchell, it is not certain that, as a hagiographer, George would have included such narratives, or composed them in such careful terms, without the existence of a contemporary debate about the relative activity of the saints' souls active after death. Moreover, just as an apology for the saints' posthumous miracles went hand in hand, for both Eustratius and Gregory, with a strong defence of the Eucharist as an effective means for assisting the souls of the faithful departed, so the power of the Eucharist (or at least one celebrated by the saint) theme reappears in George's *Life of Theodore of Sykeon*, too. Thus, the author describes how Theodore's offering of the 'bloodless sacrifice' was sufficient to release a prisoner temporarily from his chains.[220] We have already observed a different but broadly comparable story in Gregory the Great's fourth dialogue and the *Life of Symeon the Younger*; it would be repeated in Leontius of Neapolis's *Life of John the Almsgiver*.[221] As a bishop, Theodore used to claim that he saw a veil descending upon the elements as he offered the prayer of oblation, while elsewhere, the bread is described as 'skipping' and 'steaming' on the paten that Theodore employed.[222] Of course, Theodore (unlike St Benedict) was fully priest as well as monk. But his biographer's frequent demonstrations of the 'holy power' of the Eucharist when celebrated by Theodore suggest that, like Eustratius and Gregory the Great, the *Life*'s author had as sacramental a view of the saints and their miracles as they did.

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[217] *Theo*. 167 [Festugière].

[218] *Theo*. 169 in Festugière, *Vie*, 160: ἐν ἄλλαις δὲ τὴν μετὰ τῶν ἁγίων συνοίκησιν αὐτοῦ ἐπιδεικνύων, μετὰ πλήθους λαμπροφορούντων ἐπιφαίνεται εἰς δόξαν τῆς ἁγίας καὶ ὁμοουσίου καὶ ζωοποιοῦ Τριάδος, τῆς καὶ μετὰ τέλος τοὺς ἀληθινοὺς καὶ ἁγίους αὐτῆς προσκυνητὰς μεγαλυνούσης. My italics in translation.

[219] Mitchell (1993), II, 136.

[220] *Theo*. 125 [Festugière].

[221] See below 219.

As for the efficacy of the saints' posthumous intercessions, a story from the *Life of Theodore of Sykeon* encapsulates many of the anxieties we have already seen. Three times before his death in 613, Theodore was said to have suffered from serious illness. On the second occasion he was delivered through the intervention of the 'deceased' saints, Cosmas and Damian, widely venerated as healers across the empire.[223] The story deserves to be quoted in full:

> After the Saint [Theodore] had returned to his monastery, it happened that he fell so ill of a desperate sickness that he saw the holy angels coming down upon him; and he began to weep and to be sorely troubled. Now above him there stood an icon of the wonder-working saints, Cosmas and Damian. These saints were seen by him looking just as they did in that sacred icon and they came close to him, as doctors usually do; they felt his pulse and said to each other that he was in a desperate state as his strength had failed and the angels had come down from heaven to him. And they began to question him saying, 'Why are you weeping and are sore-troubled, brother?' He answered them, 'Because I am unrepentant, sirs, and also because of the little flock which is only newly instructed and is not yet established and requires much care'. They asked him, 'Would you wish us to go and plead for you (*πρεσβεύσωμεν ὑπὲρ σοῦ*) that you may be allowed to live for a while?' He answered, 'If you do this, you would do me a great service, by gaining for me time for repentance and you shall win the reward of my repentance and my work from henceforth'. Then the saints turned to the angels and besought them (*παρεκάλουν αὐτοὺς*) to grant him yet a little time while they went to implore the King on his behalf (*παρακαλέσωσι τὸν βασιλέα περὶ αὐτοῦ*). They agreed to wait. So the saints departed and entreated on his behalf (*ἱκέτευσαν περὶ αὐτοῦ*) the heavenly King, the Lord of life and death, Christ our God, Who granted unto Hezekiah the

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[222] See *Theo*. 80, 126, and 127 [Festugière].

[223] See van Esbroeck (1981).

King an addition unto his life of fifteen years (2 Kings 20.6). They obtained their request (*τυχόντες τῆς ἱκεσίας*) and came back to the Saint bringing with them a very tall young man, like in appearance to the angels that were there, though differing from them greatly in glory. He said to the holy angels, 'Depart from him, for supplication has been made to the Lord of all (*παρεκλήθη γὰρ ὁ κοινὸς πάντων δεσπότης*) and King of glory, and He has consented (*ἐχαρίσατο*) to that he should remain for a while in the flesh'. Straightaway both they and the young man disappeared from his sight, going up to heaven. But the Saints, Cosmas and Damian, said to the Saint [Theodore], 'Rise up, brother, and look to thyself and to thy flock; for our merciful Master Who readily yields to supplication (*εὐδιάλλακτος*) has received our petition on your behalf (*τὴν περὶ σοῦ πρεσβείαν ἡμῶν*) and grants you (*ἐχαρίσατό σοι*) life to labour for 'the meat which perisheth not, but endureth to everlasting life' (John 6.27) and to care for many souls'. With these words, they, too, disappeared. Theodore immediately regained his health and strength; the sickness left him and glorifying God he resumed his life of abstinence and the regular recital of the psalms with still greater zeal and diligence.[224]

[224] *Theo.* 39 in Dawes and Baynes, *Byzantine Saints*, 115–16 = Festugière, *Vie*, 34–5: *Μετὰ δὲ τὸ ὑποστρέψαι τὸν ὅσιον ἐν τῇ μονῇ αὐτοῦ, συνέβη αὐτὸν ἀρρωστῆσαι ἀρρωστίαν ἀπογνωστικήν, ὡς καὶ τοὺς ἁγίους ἀγγέλους ἰδεῖν αὐτὸν ἐλθόντας ἐπ' αὐτόν· καὶ ἤρξατο κλαίειν καὶ ἀδημονεῖν. Ἦν δὲ ἐπάνωθεν αὐτοῦ ἑστῶσα εἰκὼν τῶν ἁγίων καὶ θαυματουργῶν Κοσμᾶ καὶ Δαμιανοῦ. Καθ' ὁμοίωσιν οὖν τῆς λατρείας ἐκείνης ὤφθησαν αὐτῷ οἱ εἰρημένοι ἅγιοι, καὶ ἐγγίσαντες αὐτῷ ὡς ἐπὶ τῇ συνηθείᾳ τῶν ἰατρῶν τοὺς σφυγμοὺς ἐδοκίμαζον καὶ πρὸς ἀλλήλους ἔλεγον ἐν ἀπογνώσει αὐτὸν ὑπάρχειν διά τε τὸ πεσεῖν αὐτοῦ τὰς δυνάμεις καὶ διὰ τοὺς ἐλθόντας ἐπ' αὐτὸν οὐρανόθεν, καὶ ἤρξαντο αὐτὸν ἐρωτᾶν λέγοντες· «διὰ τί κλαίεις καὶ ἀδημονεῖς, ἀδελφέ;» Ἀπεκρίθη δὲ αὐτοῖς· «διὰ τὸ ἀμετανόητόν με εἶναι, κύριοί μου, καὶ διὰ τὸ μικρὸν ποίμνιον τοῦτο, ὅτι νεοκατήχητον καὶ ἀδιοίκητόν ἐστι, πολλῆς ἐπιμελείας δεόμενον.» Καὶ λέγουσιν αὐτῷ· «θέλεις οὖν ἀπελθόντες πρεσβεύσωμεν ὑπὲρ σοῦ, ἵνα ἄρτι τέως συγχωρηθῇ σοι τὸ ζῆν;» Εἶπεν δὲ αὐτοῖς· «ἐὰν τοῦτο ποιήσητε καὶ ἐμοὶ τὰ μεγάλα παρέχητε καιρὸν μετανοίας μοι ἐξαιτούμενοι, καὶ τῆς ἀπὸ τοῦ νῦν ἐργασίας μου καὶ μετανοίας τὸν μισθὸν κερδανεῖτε.» Οἱ δὲ ἅγιοι στραφέντες πρὸς τοὺς ἀγγέλους παρεκάλουν αὐτοὺς ἐνδοῦναι τέως αὐτῷ μικρόν, ἕως ἀπελθόντες παρακαλέσωσι τὸν βασιλέα περὶ αὐτοῦ. Οἱ δὲ ἐπένευσαν ἀναμένειν αὐτούς. Ἀπελθόντες οὖν οἱ ἅγιοι ἱκέτευσαν περὶ αὐτοῦ τὸν ζωῆς καὶ θανάτου ἐξουσιαστὴν ἐπουράνιον βασιλέα Χριστὸν τὸν θεὸν ἡμῶν, τὸν καὶ Ἐζεκίᾳ τῷ βασιλεῖ προσθήκην ζωῆς δεκαπέντε ἐτῶν χαρισάμενον· καὶ τυχόντες τῆς ἱκεσίας παρεγένοντο πρὸς τὸν ἁγιώτατον, ἔχοντες ἐν μέσῳ αὐτῶν τινα εὐμεγέθη νεανίσκον ὅμοιον τῆς τῶν παρόντων ἀγγέλων ἰδέας, διαφέροντα δὲ αὐτῶν μειζόνως τῇ δόξῃ· ὅστις τοῖς παροῦσιν ἁγίοις ἀγγέλοις ἔφη· «ἀναχωρήσατε ἀπ' αὐτοῦ· παρεκλήθη γὰρ ὁ κοινὸς πάντων δεσπότης καὶ βασιλεὺς τῆς δόξης περὶ αὐτοῦ, καὶ τὸμένειν αὐτὸν τέως ἐν τῇ σαρκὶ ἐχαρίσατο.» Οἳ καὶ εὐθέως σὺν αὐτῷ ἀφανεῖς ἐγένοντο εἰς οὐρανοὺς ἀνιόντες. Οἱ δὲ ἅγιοι Κοσμᾶς καὶ Δαμιανὸς πρὸς τὸν ἅγιον ἔφησαν· «ἀνάστηθι, ἀδελφέ, καὶ πρόσεχε σεαυτῷ καὶ τῷ ποιμνίῳ σου· ἐδέξατο γὰρ τὴν περὶ σοῦ πρεσβείαν ἡμῶν ὁ εὐδιάλλακτος καὶ φιλάνθρωπος ἡμῶνδεσπότης, καὶ ἐχαρίσατό σοι τὸ ζῆν εἰς ἐργασίαν βρώσεως οὐκ*

Without knowledge of the significance of Eustratius's defence of the saints' ongoing activity *post mortem* and their undiminished role in the next life as intercessors and benefactors to the living, the modern reader of Theodore's *Life* would risk missing the meaning of this episode. But the repetition of the various Greek synonyms for intercession (*πρεσβεύσωμεν*, *πρεσβείαν*), supplication (*ἱκέτευσαν*, *ἱκεσίας*), and entreaty (*παρεκάλουν*, *παρακαλέσωσι*, *παρεκλήθη*), and their result (*ἐχαρίσατο*, *ἐχαρίσατό*), have the effect of establishing these concepts as the centre of this chapter, of foregrounding them as the focus of its author's interest and attention here.[225] By staging a confrontation between the saints and the angels, Theodore's biographer underscored the integrity of the saints' activities and their distinct autonomy apart from (indeed, their superiority over) the ministrations of the angels. Like others we have seen in this chapter, the story thus turned on showcasing the efficacy of the intercessory powers of the saints. On this interpretation, the account of Theodore's rescue from the angels through Cosmas and Damian's intercession can be read as participating in the contemporary debate on the nature of the saints' activity *post mortem*. It is also significant that Theodore's biographer sought to confirm Cosmas and Damian's apparition to Theodore through the conformity of their appearance in this apparition to the representation of the saints in their devotional images. Although references like this to images in sixth-century hagiography have been rendered controversial, their relevance to the contemporary debate about the saints' miracles and apparitions cannot be denied, as we shall see.[226]

Despite the 'strong view' of the saints' miracles that emerges in it, the Life also indicates that Theodore's thaumaturgy occasionally encountered opposition. In one story, we learn that no less a figure than the abbot of a monastery disbelieved in a miracle Theodore was

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ἀπολλυμένης, ἀλλὰ μενούσης εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον, καὶ εἰς ἐπιμέλειαν πολλῶν ψυχῶν.» Καὶ ταῦτα εἰπόντες αὐτῷ ἀφανεῖς ἐγένοντο καὶ αὐτοί. Αὐτὸς δὲ εὐθέως διαφορὰν καὶ ἰσχὺν ἀναλαβὼν ἀνέστη ὑγιὴς δοξάζων τὸν θεόν· καὶ πλείονα σπουδὴν καὶ ἀκρίβειαν εἰς τὴν ἐγκράτειαν αὐτοῦ καὶ τὸν τῆς ψαλμῳδίας κανόνα ἀνέλαβε.

[225] Compare the notion of Theme in the context of a functional approach to language: Halliday (1984) 38–67.

[226] For the prominence of images and icons in Theodore's world, see Cormack (1985) 42–9; and more generally, Kitzinger (1954); and Cameron (1979*b*). For recent arguments against the authenticity of such references, see Brubaker (1998) and (2010), who follows many of the conclusions of Speck (1991).

reported to have performed in healing a child that had fallen into a cauldron of boiling water.[227] Believing that the water was in fact cold, the abbot put his own hand in the cauldron. When it was subsequently burned, the abbot's doubts vanished and he begged Theodore to restore his scorched hand! Significantly, 'doubts' featured among the spiritual diseases that Theodore was credited with healing.[228] But the *Life of Theodore of Sykeon* also seems to reflect the anxiety about the potentially idolatrous overtones of the saints' miracles that we have observed in other texts from the turn of the sixth and seventh centuries. The previous story about Cosmas and Damian, which, as we have seen, underlined the saints' role as effective patrons and intercessors on behalf of the living is thus balanced, perhaps deliberately, in the *Life of Theodore* through the presence of another story that sought to locate the saints' thaumaturgical powers in the broader economy of Christian monotheism. This story concerned a Christian cleric who doubted the reports of Theodore's miracles. His hagiographer wrote:

> Although many such miracles were daily wrought by the saint through the grace of God abiding in him, a certain deacon of the cathedral in Anastasioupolis, called Dometianus, disbelieved in them and was not a little sceptical and was offended (lit. 'scandalized') in him (*δυσπιστῶν ἐπ᾽ αὐτοῖς καὶ οὐ μικρῶς διστάζων καὶ σκανδαλιζόμενος εἰς αὐτόν*). Now one day, a Sunday, a man from the metropolis of Ancyra came to the Saint and brought his son who was dumb. As they arrived at the time of the administration of the Holy Communion in the Catholic church of the Holy Wisdom they went up to participate; and when the boy yawned, the Saint said to him, 'Say Amen, child!' and the child immediately obeyed him and pronounced the 'Amen'. The father began with a loud voice to glorify God and to proclaim the wonder that had been wrought. Whilst all present were amazed and fell singing praises to God, the Archdeacon Dometianus suddenly fell to the ground. Some of the clergy rushed forward and lifted him up; he was trembling, so they asked what had happened to him. And he answered them as follows: 'When the boy pronounced the "Amen", and the father cried out that he had been freed from dumbness, I did not believe that he spoke the truth but thought he was falsely claiming for the Saint a fraudulent glory and then I saw as it were a flame of fire come out of the child's mouth'. After this he was supported and led to the Saint, at whose feet he fell and

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[227] *Theo.* 113 [Festugière].

[228] *Theo.* 147 [Dawes and Baynes].

> besought him to offer prayers for him so that the power and wrath of the Devil which had issued from the boy might not come to him. After the Saint had heard the whole tale, he said to the deacon, 'This happened to you, my son, because you cherish some unbelief in your heart about the gift of Christ which is shown in healings; but cast it aside, "be thou faithful and not unbelieving" (John 20.27). For it is not we, but our good God, Who even now works these miracles (whatever they may be) so that we may not have any excuse for saying that He has shown no sign in our time, and that through beholding these miracles we may also believe in those which took place before us in the lifetime of the saints and thus increase in faith and serve God wholeheartedly'. After the blessed man had spoken thus, the deacon himself confessed his unbelief and when the Saint had prayed for him he was freed from his shuddering and his fear he continued in health and from henceforth he would come to the Saint in complete confidence.[229]

In this passage, the 'offence' which the deacon took at rumours of Theodore's thaumaturgy seems to have flowed from a general reserve

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[229] *Theo.* 61 in Dawes and Baynes, *Byzantine Saints*, 131–2 = Festugière, *Vie*, 51–2: *Πολλῶν δὲ τοιούτων θαυμάτων καθ' ἑκάστην ἐπιτελουμένων παρὰ τοῦ ὁσίου διὰ τῆς ἐν αὐτῷ οἰκούσης χάριτος τοῦ θεοῦ, ἦν τις διάκονος τῆς μεγάλης αὐτῶν ἐκκλησίας, τοὔνομα Δομετιανός, δυσπιστῶν ἐπ' αὐτοῖς καὶ οὐ μικρῶς διστάζων καὶ σκανδαλιζόμενος εἰς αὐτόν. Καὶ δὴ ἐν μιᾷ τῶν ἡμερῶν, κυριακῆς οὔσης, παρεγένετό τις ἄνθρωπος ἐκ τῆς Ἀγκυρανῶν μητροπόλεως πρὸς τὸν ὅσιον, ἔχων παιδίον ἄλαλον. Καὶ φθασάντων αὐτῶν κατ' αὐτὴν τὴν ὥραν τῆς μεταλήψεως τῶν θείων μυστηρίων ἐν τῇ καθολικῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ τῇ ἁγίᾳ Σοφίᾳ, προσελθόντων αὐτῶν μεταλαβεῖν καὶ τοῦ παιδὸς κεχηνότος, εἶπεν αὐτῷὁ ὅσιος· «εἰπέ, παιδίον, ἀμήν.» Παραχρῆμα δὲ τὸ παιδίον ἐλάλησεν ἀνεκτικῶς τὸ ἀμήν. Καὶ ἤρξατο ὁ πατὴρ μεγάλῃ φωνῇ δοξάζειν τὸν θεὸν καὶ διαγγέλλειν τὸ γεγονὸς σημεῖον. Πάντων δὲ θαυμαζόντων καὶ τὸν θεὸν ἀνυμνούντων, παραχρῆμα Δομετιανὸς ὁ ἀρχιδιάκονος ἔπεσεν εἰς τὸ ἔδαφος. Προσελθόντεσοὖν τινες τῶν κληρικῶν ἤγειραν αὐτὸν τρέμοντα, καὶ ἐπυνθάνοντο τί γέγονεν αὐτῷ. Ἀπήγγειλεν δὲ αὐτοῖς ὅτι «λαλήσαντος τοῦ παιδίου τὸ ἀμὴν καὶ τοῦ πατρὸς αὐτοῦ ἀνακράξαντος ὡς ἀπὸ ἀφωνίας λυθέντος, ἐμοῦ δὲ ἀπιστήσαντος ὡς οὐκ ἀληθεύοντος, ἀλλ' ἐπίπλαστον αὐτῷ δόξαν προσποιουμένου, εἶδονὡς φλόγα πυρὸς ἐκ τοῦ στόματος τοῦ παιδίου ἐξελθοῦσαν.» Ταῦτα δὲ εἰπών, παρακρατούμενος προσῆλθε τῷ ἁγίῳ, καὶ πεσὼν εἰς τοὺς πόδας αὐτοῦ παρεκάλει εὐχὴν αὐτῷ ποιῆσαι, ἵνα μὴ ἐξελθοῦσα ἐνέργεια διαβολικὴ καὶ ὀργὴ ἐκ τοῦ παιδίου χωρήσῃ ἐν αὐτῷ. Μαθὼν δὲ ὁ ὅσιος τὸ γεγονὸς εἶπεν αὐτῷ· «τοῦτο, τέκνον, συνέβη σοι, διότι ἀπιστίαν τινὰ ἔχεις ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ σου ἐπὶ τῇ δωρεᾷ τοῦ Χριστοῦ τῇ γινομένῃ ἐπὶ τῶν ἰαμάτων· ἀλλ' ἀποθέμενος ταύτην, γενοῦ πιστὸς καὶ μὴ ἄπιστος. Ταύτας γὰρ τὰς θαυματουργίας οὐχ ἡμεῖς ἀλλ' ὁ ἀγαθὸς θεὸς ἡμῶν καὶ νῦν ἐπιτελεῖ ἅπερ ἂν <ᾖ>, ἵνα μὴ ἔχωμεν πρόφασιν τοῦ λέγειν ὅτιἐπὶ ἡμῶν οὐδὲν θαῦμα ἔδειξε, καὶ ἵνα διὰ τῆς τούτων θεωρίας καὶ τὰ πρὸ ἡμῶν ἐπὶ τῶν ἁγίων γεγενημένα πιστεύωμεν, καὶ ἀδιστάκτως τῷ θεῷ λατρεύωμεν τῇ πίστει ἐπαυξάνοντες.» Ταῦτα δὲ εἰπόντος τοῦ μακαρίου, ἐξωμολογήσατο καὶ αὐτὸς τὴν αὐτοῦ ἀπιστίαν, καὶ λαβὼν εὐχὴν ἀπηλλάγη τῆς φρίκης καὶ τοῦ φόβουκαὶ ὑγιὴς διετέλει, πολλῇ πίστει προσερχόμενος αὐτῷ τοῦ λοιποῦ.*

vis-à-vis any celebration of the saints' thaumaturgy in view of the potential for idolatry it harboured. By affirming that 'such miracles were daily wrought by the saint through the grace of God abiding in him' (*διὰ τῆς ἐν αὐτῷ οἰκούσης χάριτος τοῦ θεοῦ*), Theodore's hagiographer reiterated the notion that the ultimate origins of Theodore's miracles lay in God. As Theodore himself was reported to have said, 'it is not we, but our good God, Who even now works these miracles' (*τὰς θαυματουργίας οὐχ ἡμεῖς ἀλλ' ὁ ἀγαθὸς θεὸς ἡμῶν καὶ νῦν ἐπιτελεῖ*). Again this attempt to reconcile the saints' personal thaumaturgical powers to the overarching sovereignty of the one Christian God recalls an important aspect of Gregory and Eustratius's apologies for the saints.

Despite Theodore's origins in rural Anatolia, it should not be imagined that either the holy man himself or the monastic community that later oversaw the composition of his Life was isolated from the sources of power and patronage at Constantinople. Theodore's hagiographer depicts the saint as travelling to the capital on three occasions, once under each of the emperors Maurice (582–602), Phocas (602–10), and Heraclius (610–41). Although the last two of these three obtained the throne by shedding the blood of his predecessor, Theodore's relationship with each of them appears to have been close. On the first occasion, Theodore was invited by Maurice, the 'Christ-loving emperor', to come and bless the 'God-guarded' imperial city in person:

> About that time the holy servant of Christ received letters both from the Christ-loving (*φιλοχρίστου*) Emperor Maurice and from the blessed Patriarch Cyriacus, and from the magnates urging him to come up to Constantinople, the imperial city, and give them his blessing. Consequently, being thus compelled, he travelled to the divinely protected [lit. 'God-guarded', *θεοφυλάκτῳ*] city, and after greeting the most blessed Patriarch Cyriacus and the Emperor and the senate and pronouncing a suitable blessing in each case, he sat down to table with them. The emperor and the empress and all the officers of the imperial bedchamber showed a tender regard for him and accorded him much honour. [. . .] During the short time Theodore stayed in the capital God through him performed great miracles in the city.[230]

[230] *Theo.* 82 in Dawes and Baynes, *Three Byzantine Saints*, 145 = Festugière, *Vie*, 69–70: *Κατ' ἐκεῖνον δὲ τὸν καιρὸν ἦλθον ἐπιστολαὶ προτρεπτικαὶ πρὸς τὸν ὅσιὸν δοῦλον τοῦ Χριστοῦ ἔκ τε τοῦ φιλοχρίστου βασιλέως Μαυρικίου καὶ τοῦ μακαρίου πατριάρχου*

The miracles included Theodore's healing of one of Maurice's children.[231] Having subsequently foretold Phocas's *coup d'état*, Theodore entertained a close relationship with Domniztiolus, the new emperor's nephew and confidante. Although Theodore is reported to have warned Phocas to desist from his bloody purges of those connected to the previous emperor, Theodore nevertheless obtained a reprieve for Domnitziolus after Heraclius's *putsch* in 610.[232] Proving his political dexterity, Theodore travelled to Constantinople to bless this latest emperor, too.[233]

While Theodore received a number of privileges for his Anatolian monastery in return for the blessings he bestowed on these imperial patrons, the *Life of Theodore of Sykeon* is remarkable because it asserts that it was the emperors themselves who sought out Theodore's services and marked his prayers as advantageous to the empire's cause. Although this may be partly owed to the author's own conceit, there is evidence to suggest that between *circa* 575 and 625 the government at Constantinople recognized the importance of patronizing saints and their cults as a means for enhancing the sacredness of imperial authority itself.[234] As in Eustratius's *Life of Golinduch* with which this chapter began, the *Life of Theodore* seems to reflect a widely promoted rhetoric that increasingly portrayed the safety of the Christian empire as flowing to an important degree from the intercessions of its sainted patrons. Yet by the 640s when George, Theodore's biographer, completed his Life of the saint, the Arab occupation of the Near Eastern provinces, like the travails of the 'God-guarded' empire earlier in the century, must have raised questions in the minds of many about the wisdom of this ideology and its foundations. Predictably, for Theodore's hagiographer the fault lay not with the saints, but with the 'Christ-loving' emperors who failed

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Κυριακοῦ καὶ τῶν ἀρχόντων ἐπὶ τὸ εἰσελθεῖν αὐτὸν ἐν τῇ βασιλίδι πόλει Κωνσταντίνου καὶ εὐλογῆσαι αὐτούς. Ἐκ τούτου οὖν ἀναγκασθεὶς εἰσῆλθεν ἐν τῇ θεοφυλάκτῳ πόλει, καὶ ἀσπασάμενος τὸν μακαριώτατον πατριάχην Κυριακὸν καὶ τὸν βασιλέα καὶ τὴν σύγκλητον, καὶ εὐλογήσας αὐτοὺς διαφόρως, κατεκλίθη μετ᾽ αὐτῶν. Πολὺ δὲ ποθεινῶς προσέκειντο αὐτῷ ὅ τε βασιλεὺς καὶ ἡ αὐγοῦστα καὶ ὅλον τὸ κουβούκλιον, καὶ μεγάλην τιμὴν ἀπέμενον αὐτῷ [. . .]. *Ἐν δὲ τῷ ὀλίγῳ καιρῷ τῆς διατριβῆς αὐτοῦ μεγάλα θαυμάσια ἐποίησε δι᾽ αὐτοῦ ὁ θεὸς ἐν τῇ πόλει.*

[231] *Theo.* 97 [Festugière].

[232] See *Theo.* 128–34, 152–5 [Festugière].

[233] *Theo.* 152–5 [Festugière].

[234] See Cameron (1979*b*), Haldon (1997*b*) 37–9 and the conclusion to this study.

to make the most of their intercessions. George described the visit which Heraclius paid to Theodore and his monastery on his way to the east shortly before the saint's death and the fall of Antioch to the Persians in 613. He recounted:

> During Lent, as the Christ-loving Emperor Heraclius was going down from the imperial city to Antioch in the east to prepare a resistance against the Persians, he came up to the monastery to recieve the blessing of the saint. The blessed one rose and went to greet the emperor at the narthex of the church of the holy martyr George. They embraced each other and then entered into the church of the glorious martyr and the Archangel. The blessed one made there a prayer, recommending the emperor to God, and presented him with gifts of benediction [lit. *eulogiai*] – bread made with pure flour, apples and choice wine – and he invited him to share supper. But the emperor, because of his great haste, refused to eat and even to accept the gifts he had been offered, saying: 'Keep them, father, and pray for me. I shall pass by on my way home to collect them. I shall stay then as long as you like and I shall enjoy your blessings and holy intercessions at leisure.' [. . .] Thereupon, after obtaining the saint's commendation before God, he left for the city of Antioch, where he engaged in battle with the Persians [. . .]. But the blessed one was grieved that he did not take with him the gifts of benediction. 'Had he taken them', he said, 'this would have been for him a great victory and he would have returned with gladness. But the fact that he has left these gifts here is a sign of our defeat. Yet if he had not come up and received the blessing of the saints, this calamity would have led to his death – and to the death of all of us.[235]

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[235] *Theo.* 166 in Festugière, *Vie*, 153–4: Ἐν δὲ ταῖς ἡμέραις τῆς ἁγίας τεσσαρακοστῆς κατερχόμενος ὁ φιλόχριστος βασιλεὺς Ἡράκλειος ἀπὸ τῆς βασιλίδος πόλεως ἐπὶ Ἀντιόχειαν τῆς ἀνατολῆς εἰς τὴν κατὰ Περσῶν ἀντιπαράταξιν ἀνῆλθεν εἰς τὸ μοναστήριον ἐπὶ τὸ λαβεῖν τὴν εὐχὴν αὐτοῦ. Ἀναστὰς δὲ ὁ μακάριος προσυπήντησεν αὐτῷ πρὸς τῇ εἰσόδῳ τοῦ ναοῦ τοῦ ἁγίου μάρτυρος Γεωργίου· καὶ περιπτυξάμενοι ἀλλήλους εἰσῆλθον ἐν τῷ ναῷ τοῦ ἐνδόξου μάρτυρος καὶ ἐν τῷ ναῷ τοῦ Ἀρχαγγέλου, καὶ ἐποίησεν αὐτῷ εὐχὴν ὁ μακάριος παραθέμενος αὐτὸν τῷ θεῷ· ἐπεδίδου δὲ αὐτῷ εὐλογίας διά τε σιλιγνίου καὶ μήλων καὶ οἴνου ἐπιλέκτου, προτρεψάμενος αὐτῷ καὶ γεύσασθαι. Ὁ δὲ βασιλεὺς ὡς διὰ πολλὴν σπουδὴν παρῃτήσατο γεύσασθαί τινος καὶ τοῦ δέξασθαι τὰς δεδομένας αὐτῷ εὐλογίας εἰπών· «ταῦτα φύλαξόν μοι, πάτερ, καὶ εὖξαι ἡμῖν· καὶ ἐν τῷ ἐπαναλύειν με ἔρχομαι καὶ τότε αὐτὰ λαμβάνω καὶ διαποιῶ ἐνταῦθα ἕως οὗ κελεύεις, καὶ ἐν εὐκαιρίᾳ. πολλῇ τῶν τε εὐλογιῶν καὶ τῶν παναγίων σου εὐχῶν ἐν ἀπολαύσει γίνομαι.» [. . .] Ἐν τούτοις λαβὼν αὐτοῦ τὴν παράθεσιν ἀπῄει ἐπὶ τὴν Ἀντιοχέων πόλιν, ἐν ᾗ καὶ τὸν κατὰ Περσῶν πόλεμον συνῆψεν, παρόντος ἐκεῖσε καὶ Νικήτα τοῦ πατρικίου καὶ κόμητος. Ἐλυπήθη δὲ ὁ μακάριος ἐπὶ τὸ καταλεῖψαι αὐτὸν τὰς εὐλογίας εἰπὼν ὅτι· «ἐὰν ἔλαβεν αὐτάς, τεκμήριον ἦν τῆς νίκης αὐτοῦ καὶ μετὰ χαρᾶς ὑπέστρεφεν· τὸ δὲ καταλιπεῖν αὐτὸν ταύτας σημεῖόν ἐστι τῆς ἥττας ἡμῶν, καὶ εἰ μὴ ὅτι ἀνῆλθεν καὶ ἔλαβεν τὴν εὐχὴν τῶν ἁγίων, ἐπεὶ καὶ μέχρις αὐτοῦ εἶχεν φθάσαι καὶ

By mid-century, in other words, the fact that the prayers of the saints like Theodore had so manifestly failed to preserve the empire's integrity clearly required at least some explanation, one that the author of the *Life of Theodore* was prepared to offer.[236]

LEONTIUS OF NEAPOLIS, *LIFE OF JOHN THE ALMSGIVER*

Composed at a similar point in the seventh century to the story from the *Life of Theodore of Sykeon* above, Leontius of Neapolis's *Life of John the Almsgiver* (641–2) offers one of the most splendid demonstrations of the reality of the saints' ongoing activity *post mortem* from the period.[237] As Chalcedonian Patriarch of Alexandria, John succeeded Gregory's close correspondent and friend, Eulogius, and, as we have seen, he hosted John Moschus and Sophronius of Jerusalem during their sojourn in Egypt.[238] But five days before dying in his native Cyprus (where he had taken refuge from the invading Persians in 619), John was visited by a distraught woman who claimed to have committed a sin so grievous she could not confess it to human ears. She also affirmed that she had sought John out as a great saint whose intercession would certainly be heard by God, since, as she believed, 'the Lord said about men such as you, "Whatsoever things ye shall loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven, and whatsoever things ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven [. . .]" (Matt. 18.18)'.[239] Of course, these were the same words of Jesus' that Gregory adduced to justify Benedict's posthumous absolution of the sinful nuns and, in Leontius's telling, the outcome of the story would recapitulate the

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εἰ̓ς πάντας ἡ̔μᾶς τὸ τοιοῦτον πένθος.» Theodore goes on to prophesy that Heraclius will reign for thirty years, which makes this chapter important for dating of the text as a whole.

[236] See further the conclusion to this study below.

[237] On Leontius and his Life, see above all Déroche (1995) 15–36, with Mango (1984); and Hofstra (1988).

[238] The pair also appear in Leontius's Life. See *JohAlm* 33.

[239] *JohAlm*. 46 in Dawes and Baynes, *Byzantine Saints*, 258 = Festugière and Rydén, *Léontios*, 406: *εἶπεν γὰρ περὶ τῶν κατά σε ὁ κύριος ὅτι "Ὅσα ἂν λύσητε ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς ἔσται λελυμένα ἐν τῷ οὐράνῳ καὶ ὅσα ἐὰν δήσητε ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς ἔσται δεδεμένα ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ'.*

essentials of Gregory's view of the saints' vigorous activity in the afterlife.[240] Thus, John told the woman that if she had real confidence in the power of his intercessions (lit. 'if you really believe in God that by my unworthy intercession He will forgive you'), she should go home and write out her sins on a tablet and bring it back to him sealed.[241] She did so and the patriarch promised that the tablet would never be opened by human hands. Distressingly, however, John died before granting absolution and the woman spent three days in tears at the saint's tomb wondering what had become of her tablet and her sins. Finally, John's soul appeared to her, his burial robes physically drenched with the woman's tears, and handed her the tablet. Breaking the unopened seal, the woman was amazed to see that her sins had disappeared and new words were written in their place: '"For the sake of My servant John your sin is blotted out".'[242] She expressed her confidence in the saint with the following solemn affirmation: '"[. . .] holy man, you are not dead, but alive; for it is written, 'The righteous live for ever' (Wisd. 5.15)".'[243]

On one level, this narrative clearly served to demonstrate the sanctity of Leontius's subject in a setting where doubt seems to have lingered concerning John's status as a saint. Indeed, the story does not seem to have appeared in the original encomium on John that John Moschus and Sophronius of Jerusalem composed and which served as the source for Leontius's account.[244] More significantly, however, the woman's final words above function as an apology not only for John's sainthood, but for the ongoing activity of the saints' disembodied souls *post mortem* more generally—that is to say, the same debate that we observed both Eustratius and Gregory the Great engage in at the end of the previous century. From this perspective, the Leontius's *Life of John the Almsgiver* is evidence that, in the mid-seventh century, hagiographers still found themselves constrained to rebut apparently widespread notions of the saints' posthumous inactivity.[245] From this perspective, the woman's confession can equally be read as intended to reiterate the distinctive, but as we have seen contested, view of the saints' ongoing activity beyond the grave that Eustratius, Gregory, and Sophronius had striven to uphold. This is not necessarily surprising, as how far Leontius's hagiographies engaged with the themes debated in the seventh-century Question and Answer literature, including the collection of Anastasius of Sinai who specifically downplayed the posthumous activity of the saints, has been demonstrated before.[246] Indeed, Leontius supplied three further miracles to prove the authenticity of John's benefactions from heaven, including the issue of fragrant myrrh from his tomb, which he exhorted his 'Christ-loving readers' not 'to refuse to believe in', affirming that 'even to the present day on this Christ-loving isle of Cyprus this wonderful grace of God can be seen at work in various saints. From their venerable relics flows sweet-smelling myrrh as if from a well, for the praise of the goodness of God, the honour of his saints and to encourage the zealous emulation of them among us [. . .].'[247] That this should be read as an apology not just for John's sainted status, but for the *post-mortem* ministrations of the saints in general is suggested by the fact that when Leontius elsewhere offered a thorough apology for the saints' cult, he included a reference to just this kind of tomb miracle.[248]

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[240] See Chapter One of this book.

[241] *JohAlm*. 46 in Dawes and Baynes, *Byzantine Saints*, 258 = Festugière and Rydén, *Léontios*, 406: *Εἰ ἄρα πιστεύεις, ὦ γύναι, τῷ θεῷ ὅτι διὰ τῆς ταλαιπωρίας μου συγχωρῇ σοι τὸἔγκλημα ὃ λέγεις, ἐξομολόγησαί μοι αὐτό.*

[242] *JohAlm*. 46 in Dawes and Baynes, *Byzantine Saints*, 260 = Festugière and Rydén, *Léontios*, 407: *Διὰ Ἰωάννην τὸν δοῦλόν μου ἐξήλειπταί σου ἡ ἁμαρτία.*

[243] *JohAlm*. 46 in Dawes and Baynes, *Byzantine Saints*, 259 = Festugière and Rydén, *Léontios*, 407: [. . .] *οὐ γὰρ ἀπέθανες, ὅσιε, ἀλλὰ καθεύδεις. γέγραπται γάρ· 'Δίκαιοι εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα ζῶσιν'.*

[244] Déroche (1995) 232–5; Mango (1984) 36–8.

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[245] Auzépy (1995) 37. See further Haldon (2007) 275–7.

[246] See Déroche (1995) 270–96. For Anastius's objections to saintly activity beyond the grave, see the appendix below, 343–56.

[247] *JohAlm*. 46 in Dawes and Baynes, *Byzantine Saints*, 261 = H. Gelzer, *Leontios von Neapolis: Leben des heiligen Johannes des Barmherzigen* (Leipzig, 1893), 102–3: *Καὶ μηδεὶς, ὦ φιλόχριστοι, τῇ τοιαύτῃ θαυματουργίᾳ ἀπιστείτω. Καὶ γὰρ μέχρι τοῦ νῦν ἔστιν ἰδεῖν ἐν ταύτῃ τῇ φιλοχρίστῳ τῶν Κυπρίων νήσῳ ἐν διαφόροις ἁγίοις τὴν τοιαύτην τοῦ θεοῦ χάριν ἐνεργοῦσαν καὶ ὥσπερ ἐκ πηγῶν τὴν τῶν μύρων εὐωδίαν ἐκ τῶν τιμίων αὐτῶν λειψάνων προχεομένην εἰς δόξαν τῆς αὐτοῦ ἀγαθότητος, τιμὴν δὲ τῶν ἁγίων αὐτοῦ, προθυμίαν δὲ καὶ ζῆλον ἀγαθὸν τῶν μεταγενεστέρων ἀνθρωπων* [. . .]. This passage does not appear in the manuscripts used by Festugière to establish his version of the text: cf. Festugière and Rydén, *Léontios*, 626. But it is not necessarily an interpolation, as Leontius's text seems to have suffered abbreviation rather than expansion by later editors: Festugière and Rydén, *Léontios*, 269–96.

[248] See Leontius of Neapolis, *Against the Jews* (*c.* 630) in Déroche (1994) 68: *Πόσαι, εἰπέ μοι, ἐπισκιάσεις, πόσαι ἀναβλύσεις, πολλάκις δὲ καὶ αἱμάτων ῥύσεις ἐξ εἰκόνων καὶ λειψάνων μαρτύρων γεγόναις*; The connection between the two texts has been noted before: Déroche (1995) 235 n. 25.

Leontius's account of the death of John the Almsgiver thus provides further evidence of the way in which hagiographers shaped their literary portraits of saints in response to a debate about their activity *post mortem* that persisted into the seventh century. But, it has been argued, this debate about the posthumous activity (or otherwise) of the human soul also carried with it important consequences for the care of the dead through the offering of the Eucharist. We have already observed the defence of this practice that both Eustratius of Constantinople and Gregory the Great offered in the context of this debate.[249] In his *Life of John the Almsgiver*, Leontius of Neapolis also acknowledged the implicit nexus between the saints' souls and the Eucharist by repeating a story which, he claimed, Patriarch John himself often related. Mirroring Gregory's story concerning the soldier captured by the Lombards, John's story concerned a young Cypriot soldier taken captive by the Persian army and presumed dead by his family. When he eventually escaped and returned to Cyprus, his family told him that they had had the Eucharist offered for his soul at Epiphany, Easter, and Whitsun. The man replied that on each one of those days during every year of his captivity, his chains were released and he was free to go as he pleased, although the following day he always found himself chained up again.[250] Crucially, according to Leontius, John's purpose in telling this story was the same as Gregory's, that is to say, to defend the efficacy of prayers and oblations brought for the sake of the dead. 'The holy Patriarch used to say: "We learn from this story that those who have fallen asleep obtain comfort from the prayers we make on their behalf".'[251] The apologetic tone that surrounds the presence of both of these themes—the ongoing activity of the souls of the saints beyond the grave and the efficacy of the church's care fot the dead—in Leontius's work position the latter in a continuum of debate that seems to have remained a constant feature of religious life in the East Roman world from the time of Eustratius at the end of the sixth century. As we shall see further below, however, the efficacy of the heavenly mediation not only of the prayers of the saints, but also the sacramental instruments of the church seems to have required further re-affirmation in the aftermath of the disasters which the events of the seventh century visited upon the Christian empire.

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[249] See Chapter Two of this book, 133–4.

[250] Gregory's version of the story appears not only in his *Dialogues* but also in his *Homilies on the Gospels*.

[251] *JohAlm* 25 in Dawes and Baynes, *Byzantine Saints*, 235 = Festugière and Rydén, *Léontios*, 376: "Καὶ ἔκτοτε οὖν", ὁ μέγας φήσιν, "μανθάνομεν ἔχειν ἄνεσιν τοὺς κοιμηθέντας ἐξ ὧν ὑπερ αὐτῶν ποιοῦμεν συνάξεων."

THE MIRACLES OF ARTEMIUS

Finally, the saints' autonomy from the angels was reaffirmed, in mid seventh-century Constantinople, by the author of the *Miracles of Artemius* (658–68). Miracle Thirty-Four described the story of a young woman named Anna, a devoted attendee of St Artemius's tomb-shrine. When plague brought Anna close to death, she saw the angels coming to take her away. Artemius intervened, however, chastizing the angels for their temerity. 'What are you doing?' asked Artemius: 'You are not removing her. Leave her to me, for I have accepted her and she is mine.'[252] Anna subsequently recovered. But the anonymous author provided his own gloss on this miracle, one designed to lead his audience to appreciate the nature of Artemius's intercessory powers. The saint was not arrogating to himself, a mere man, an authority that was God's alone, as Eustratius's opponents had alleged at the end of the previous century, but demonstrating his active solicitude for his suppliants within a divinely ordained economy. He affirmed:

> This vision was given to the girl not because the martyr had opposed himself to the divine command (heaven forbid!) but in order that she might realize that the Lord of life had long ago favoured her through Artemius in that she should not believe that constant lighting of lamps was considered by the saints to be in vain.[253]

Like Cosmas and Damian in the *Life of Theodore*, moreover, Artemius's personal intervention was confirmed through the resemblance between the appearance of the saint in Anna's vision and his representation on devotional images: 'Again they asked her: "In what form did you see St Artemius?" She said [. . .]: "He resembled the icon [. . .]"'.[254] Clearly, if any were unconvinced of the hagiographer's claims regarding Artemius's personal activity on behalf of his supplicants, the evidence from the icon was designed to rebut it.[255]

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[252] *Art.* 34 in *Artemios*, Crisafulli and Nesbitt (eds.), 178–9: "*Τί ποιεῖτε; οὐκ ἐπαίρετε αὐτήν· ἐάσατέ μοι αὐτήν, ἐγὼ γὰρ αὐτὴν ἀνεδεξάμην καὶ ἐμή ἐστιν*".

[253] *Art.* 34 in *Artemios*, Crisafulli and Nesbitt (eds.), 180–1: *ταῦτα ἐδείχθη τῇ κόρῃ οὐχ ὥς τοῦ θείου προστάγματος ἀντιταξαμένου τοῦ μάρτυρος (μὴ γένοιτο), ἀλλ' ἵνα γινώσκῃ, ὅτι αὐτῷ ταύτην ὁ τῆς ζωῆς κύριος ἐχαρίσατο πάλαι καὶ τὸ μὴ νομίζειν αὐτὴν εἰς κενὸν τὴν ἀδιάλειπτον ἐκείνην ἁφὴν λογισθῆναι τοῖς ἁγίοις.*

THE VISIBILITY OF THE SAINTS' 'VISIONARY BODIES'

In July 599, Gregory the Great wrote to reprimand a bishop in southern Gaul for the latter's recent attack on the images that adorned the walls of various churches in his diocese of Marseilles. Gregory wrote:

> It has recently come to our attention that your Fraternity saw some people adoring images, and you smashed those images and threw them out of the churches. And certainly we applauded you for having had the zeal not to allow anything made by human hands to be adored, but we judge that you ought not to have smashed those images. For a picture is provided in churches for the reason that those who are illiterate may at least read by looking at the walls what they cannot read in books. Therefore, your Fraternity should have both preserved them and prohibited the people from their adoration, so that both the illiterate might have a way of acquiring a knowledge of history, and the people would not be sinning at all in their adoration of a picture.[256]

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[254] *Art.* 34 in *Artemios*, Crisafulli and Nesbitt (eds.), 180–1: *πάλιν ἐρωτῶσιν αὐτήν· "Τὸν ἅγιον Ἀρτέμιον ποίῳ τρόπῳ ὄντα ἑώρακας"; ἡ δὲ εἶπεν* [. . .]*· ""Ὅμοιος ἦν τῆς ἑστώσης εἰκόνος* [. . .]".

[255] This narrative, too, is often taxed as an eighth- or ninth-century interpolation: Speck (1991) 226–8; Haldon (1997*a*) 35; Brubaker (1998) 1233–4. But see Déroche (1993) 100; and Dal Santo (2011*a*).

[256] Gregory the Great, *ep*. 9.209 in Martyn, *Letters*, II, 674 = CCL 140, 769: *Praeterea indico dudum ad nos peruenisse quod fraternitas uestra quosdam imaginum adoratores aspiciens easdem ecclesiis imagines confregit atque proiecit. Et quidem zelum uos, ne quid manufactum adorati possit, habuisse laudauimus, sed frangere easdem imagines non debuisse iudicamus. Idcirco enim pictura in ecclesiis adhibetur, ut hi qui litteras nesciunt saltem in parietibus uidendo legant, quae legere in codicibus non ualent. Tua ergo fraternitas et illa seruare et ab eorum adoratu populum prohibere debuit, quatenus et litterarum nescii haberent, unde scientiam historiae colligerent, et populus in picturae adoratione minime peccaret.*

Far from heeding the pope's call to moderation, however, Serenus appears in his zeal to have continued with his local campaign of iconoclasm. Indeed, Gregory was forced the following year to write again to the bishop and rebuke him in yet stronger terms for flagrantly disregarding the fact that 'age-old custom allowed the stories of the saints to be depicted in venerable places for good reason' (*in locis uenerabilis sanctorum depingi historias non sine ratione uetustas admisit*). 'For', Gregory reiterated, 'what writing provides for those who can read, this a picture provides for the uneducated who look at it.'[257] He continued: 'And if someone should desire to paint pictures, do not prohibit him at all, but in every way avoid worshipping the images.'[258] Indeed, the second half of the sixth century appears to have witnessed a significant expansion in both the introduction of images into places of Christian worship, as well as the veneration of them by their observers.[259] This was true not only in Gaul, but across the Christian world of the Mediterranean more generally. Whatever the later fate of others like them, a significant body of sixth- and seventh-century images of Christ, the Virgin, and the saints survive at Rome and Ravenna in Italy, as well as at Mount Sinai and Thessaloniki (ancient Thessalonica) in the east.[260] In fact, we might contrast Serenus's iconoclasm with the very different attitude of his contemporary, Bishop Eusebius at Thessalonica, during whose tenure as John's predecessor as bishop a number of images that recorded the favours of St Demetrius for the city seem to have been commissioned.[261] From Rome, too, there survives an image of the Virgin and Child thought to have been used in the consecration of the Pantheon as a church in 608 shortly after Gregory's death.[262]

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[257] Gregory the Great, *ep*. 9.209 in Martyn, *Letters*, III, 745 = CCL 140, 874: *Nam quod legentibus scriptura, hoc idiotis praestat pictura cernentibus*. On Gregory's attitude towards image veneration, see Chazelle (1990) and Delierneux (2001) 399–405.

[258] Gregory the Great, *ep*. 9.209 in Martyn, *Letters*, III, 746 = CCL 140, 875: *Et si quis imagines facere uoluerit, minime prohibe, adorare uero imagines omnimodis deuita*.

[259] See esp. Kitzinger (1954) 95; and Cameron (1979) and (1992*c*); also Dal Santo (2011*a*). Cf. Brubaker (1998).

[260] See for example Weitzmann (1976); Belting (1990) 76–87, 103–12; and Wolf (2005); also Markus (1978) and Sansterre (2002).

[261] See, for example, *Dem*. 1 in Lemerle, *Démétrius*, 67, where the late sixth-century eparch, Marianus, appears to have set up an ex-voto image of the saint. Cf. Cormack (1985) 83–4; also Skedros (1999) 70–82.

[262] Brandenburg (2005) 233–4.

But images also appear to have featured, albeit indirectly, in the debate about the nature of the saints' activity after death. We have already seen that a further objection which Eustratius was forced to rebut was how, if human souls were indeed active after death, the saints' disembodied souls retained the appearance and visible likeness of their physical bodies *post mortem*. Eustratius's rebuttal of the argument suggested that his opponents had both literary and iconographical representations of the saints in mind:

> But perhaps they propose another problem for us, namely: 'How do the disembodied souls of the saints sometimes appear arrayed in armour, even with other figures, or horses or other identifying features, if they now exist naked and bodiless?' We answer that, just as the angels, who are bodiless, [. . .] imprint visions according as those who receive [them] appear worthy, so, likewise, the impressions which the souls [of the saints] imprint are not physical, but nonetheless true.[263]

It is clear from this that the formlessness of the disembodied soul was an important element of a wider argument against the plausibility of saintly apparitions and *post-mortem* miracles. In reply, Eustratius likened saintly apparitions to the effect produced by an artist who uses paint to conjure his subject. Despite not being crafted from the subject's physical flesh, Eustratius implied that nobody would deny a certain subjective reality to the painted likeness. What is significant for our purposes is that Eustratius' reference here to the saints' appearing 'arrayed in armour, [. . .] with [. . .] horses [. . .] or other identifying features' strongly suggested that both Eustratius and his opponents had iconographical representations of the saints in mind, representations that were common enough for recipients of such visions to invoke them regularly (and in the rationalists' view, erroneously) when they described their visionary experience.[264] Despite Eustratius' reference to painting, we may note that his description of a mounted warrior saint seems broadly to match the portraits of Sts Menas, Sergius, and Theodore on a number of contemporary pilgrims' tokens or *eulogiai*.[265] The cults of these saints were celebrated across the empire (including Constantinople), and the popularity of the shrines of these 'saints on horseback' could have been such that they played an emblematic role in any debate on the mechanics of saintly visions in the capital or elsewhere.[266] In the last quarter of the seventh century Anastasius of Sinai again echoed Eustratius's opponents when he queried whether it was possible 'before the Resurrection of the body, while the saints' bones and flesh are scattered abroad, for these men to appear as if they were already whole, who are often seen as armed knights seated on horseback?'[267] Like the rationalists at Constantinople, what Anastasius objected to was the tendency of the recipients of saintly visions to describe the saints in terms borrowed from the manner of their representation in devotional imagery, without realizing that the disembodied condition of the soul *post mortem* made any such physicality highly dubious.[268]

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[263] Eustratius of Constantinople, *De statu animarum post mortem* = CCG 60.2005–13: *Ἀλλ' ἴσως καὶ ἑτέραν ἀπορίαν ἡμῖν προβάλλονται λέγοντες*: "*Πῶς αἱ ἀσώματοι ψυχαὶ τῶν ἁγίων πανοπλίαν ἔσθ' ὅτε μὲν καὶ ἑτέρων σχημάτων ἢ ἵππων ἢ ἄλλων τινῶν συμβόλων ἐπιφέρονται, γυμναὶ καὶ ἀσώματοι νῦν τυγχάνουσαι;*" *Λέγομεν οὖν ὅτι ὥσπερ οἱ ἄγγελλοι ἀσώματοι ὄντες* [. . .] *τὰς ὁράσεις τυποῦσι καθὼς ἂν οἱ ὑποδεχόμενοι φανεῖεν ἄξιοι, οὕτω καὶ αἱ ψυχαὶ τὰς τυπώσεις οὐ φυσικὰς μέν, ἀληθινὰς δὲ ὅμως ποιοῦσιν.*

[264] See further Dagron (1991); Maguire (1996) 5–15; and Cox Miller (2009).

As we saw in the previous chapter of this book, the formlessness or otherwise of the disembodied soul was widely debated in the sixth century, with both Philoponus and Stephen Gobar appearing to have devoted consideration to the manner in which a disembodied human soul could be visibly apprehended by the living.[269] Whether and how the saints' souls preserved *post mortem* the physical appearance they had in the body also formed the subject of an exactly contemporaneous debate between Patriarch Anastasius I of Antioch (559–70, 593–9) and a priest named Timothy.[270] For Timothy, the apostles' ability to identify Moses and Elijah when they appeared beside Jesus

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[265] See further Dal Santo (2011*a*).

[266] Papaconstantinou (2001) 151–2 (Menas); Key Fowden (1999) 43, 130–3 (Sergius); and Janin (1953) 155–62 (Theodore).

[267] Anastasius of Sinai, *Qu. and Ans.* 19.8 in M. Richard and J.A. Munitiz (eds.), *Anastasii Sinaitae: Quaestiones et responsiones*, CCSG 59 (Turnhout, 2006), 33: *ἐπεὶ πῶς δυνατόν, μήπω τῆς ἀναστάσεως τῶν σωμάτων γεγενημένης, ἀλλ' ἔτι τῶν ὀστῶν καὶ τῶν σαρκῶν τῶν ἁγίων διεσκορπισμένων, εἴδεσθαι τούτους ἤδη ὁλοκλήρους ἄνδρας, πολλάκις εφ' ἵππους καθωπλισμένους ὀπτανομένους.*

[268] See Dagron (1991) 31–3; and Dal Santo (2011*a*) for this argument in full.

[269] See the previous Chapter of this book above, 141–2.

[270] Krausmüller (1997), (1997/98). Deposed by Justin II in 570 and resident in exile at Constantinople during Gregory the Great's sojourn there, Anastasius was later an important correspondent of Gregory as bishop. Gregory invited Anastasius to Rome, but he resumed his see at Antioch in 593. For Gregory's correspondence with Anastasius, see Gregory the Great, *Epp.* 1.7; 1.24; 1.25; 5.42; 7.24; 8.2.

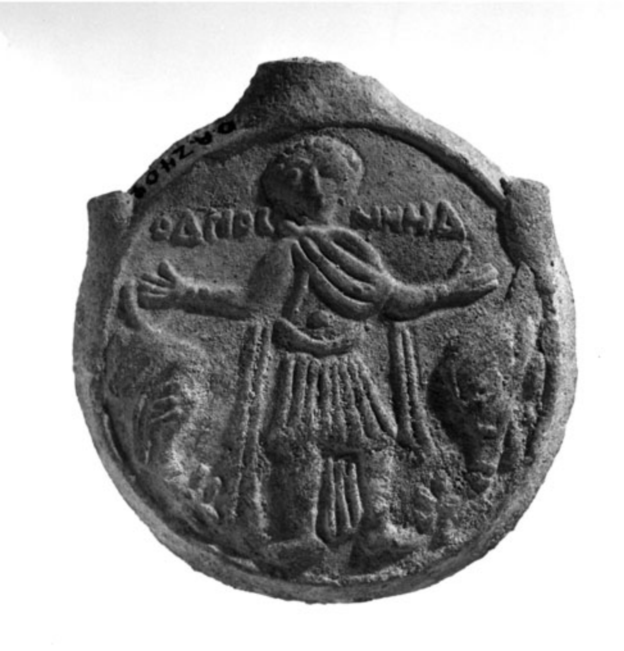

Fig. 5. Egyptian pilgrims' flask depicting St Menas of Egypt. © Trustees of the British Museum.

at his Transfiguration presupposed the disembodied soul's ability to preserve *post mortem* the form and distinguishing physical characteristics of the body—even the relevant saint's regular 'props' were included (and one thinks here of Eustratius's horses). As Krausmüller has argued, the debate at Antioch about the manner in which the dead could be identified was but one part of a wider discussion about the nature of death and the properties of the disembodied soul.

The ability of the saints' disembodied soul to assume a bodily likeness was widely asserted in much early Byzantine hagiography that trumpeted the correspondence between the saints' appearance in their posthumous apparitions and that of their images as evidence that the saints' souls did in fact retain a physical likeness. Hagiographers' haste to confirm the visibility of the saints' 'visionary bodies' seems to have been a reaction against a prevailing rationalist critique of saintly apparitions. Thus, as we have seen, Archbishop John of Thessalonica pointed to the exact correspondence between the saint's appearance in his apparitions and his likeness in his painted images in order to 'prove' Demetrius's involvement in his city's affairs. The author of the second series of the *Miracles of Cosmas and Damian* asserted the same notion in the story about the army officer stationed in Asia Minor whose wife developed a jaw abscess. Although the woman had apparently not before seen an image of the saints, after the saints visited her in an apparition she was able to recognize their appearance on an image (probably a pilgrims' token) which her husband had in his bags.[271] The theme reappeared, as we have seen, in the mid-seventh century *Miracles of Artemius*, when a standing icon of the saint was believed to confirm the subject of a woman's vision and the identity of her other-worldly healer.[272] It was also picked up in the *Miracles of Anastasius the Persian*, where one narrative recorded the punishment meted out to a noblewoman named Arete for disdaining to venerate Anastasius's relics when, in 631, they were brought back to Caesarea in Palestine from Persia where the saint had been martyred. But Arete, who was upbraided by the anonymous hagiographer for being anything but virtuous in view of her contempt for the saint, publicly refused to believe that a saint could come from Persia. After the saints' relics were installed in a newly dedicated shrine and and an image of the saint attached to its exterior, Anastasius appeared in a vision to Arete and inflicted her with severe pain in her kidneys for the sake of her scepticism. The saint appeared a second time and instructed the woman to repair to his shrine. As the woman approached it, the text reads that she 'lifted her eyes and perceived the image of the saint' (*ἄρασα τὸ ὄμμα καὶ θεασαμένη τὴν εἰκόνα τοῦ ἁγίου*) and was thus induced to acknowledge the being she had seen in the apparitions as an authentic saint: 'He is truly the one I saw in my dreams [. . .]' (*Οὗτος ἐστιν ἀληθῶς ὃν εἶδον ἐν ὕπνοις*).[273] She also repented of her unbelief. 'I now know', she confessed, 'and have been taught, that relics are to be venerated even when they come from Persia [. . .]'.[274] Once again an image, this time one prominently affixed to the exterior of a shrine, served to legitimize a saint's visionary body, and, indeed, his very status as a holy subject worthy of veneration.

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[271] See above, 163–4.

[272] See above, 220–1.

[273] Flusin, *Saint Anastase*, I, 132–3.

[274] *Anast. Pers.* 7 in Flusin, *Anastase*, I, 132–3: *Οἶδα γὰρ νῦν διδαχθεῖσα καὶ ἀπὸ Περσίδος ἐρχόμενον λείψανονπροσκυνεῖν* [. . .].

Perhaps the most striking example comes from the *Life of Theodore of Sykeon*. We saw earlier that its author described the vision which his subject enjoyed of Sts Cosmas and Damian by adding that '[t]hese saints were seen by him looking just as they did in that sacred icon [lit. 'cult image'] (*Καθ' ὁμοίωσιν οὖν τῆς λατρείας ἐκείνης ὤφθησαν αὐτῷ*).'[275] But during a visit to the imperial captital at Constantinople Theodore was himself the object of an artist's attention. His hagiographer recounted that during Theodore' stay at the monastery 'of the Romans', the monks enlisted the services of a portrait artist in order to obtain an image of the saint. Secretly observing Theodore through a small hole in the wall of his cell, the artist nevertheless succeeded in producing a representation of the saint which, when it was finally brought to his attention, Theodore himself acclaimed for the accuracy of its likeness. 'You are an accomplished thief', Theodore said to the artist, 'For what are you doing here if it is not in order to steal something?'[276] Despite the fact that he then blessed the image that had thus been made, Theodore was clearly anxious that the monastery that possessed his image had obtained an abiding claim on his miraculous benefactions, having 'stolen' a material token of his personal presence through the likeness of the image.[277] It is true that Theodore, unlike Cosmas and Damian and the other saints we have considered, was still alive when his image was made. But the story underlines how deeply felt was the importance of the perfect concordance of image and likeness for summoning the authentic presence of a holy patron, dead or alive.[278]

In Egypt, the *Miracles of Cyrus and John* also demonstrated Sophronius' readiness to conceive of the saints' souls as appearing in their own physical likeness, as well as his confusion about all that this entailed. When, shortly after arriving in Egypt, Sophronius's eyesight began to fail, Cyrus and John appeared to him in three dreams. On the third occasion, Sophronius saw not only Cyrus and John, but also his spiritual father, John Moschus, and the martyr, St Theodore, whom, Sophronius affirmed, he was also in the habit of venerating. Like other contemporary recipients of visions, Sophronius was confident that he had recognized Cyrus and John correctly because their likeness in his dream was the same as that on their images. Sophronius reported that their visionary appearance was not 'borrowed', but their own. 'The saints', he affirmed, 'do not employ diverse forms and do not appear in figures not their own, but rather in those in which they exist and are represented.'[279] By explicitly asserting that the saints' disembodied souls could be recognized in this way, Sophronius appears consciously to have rejected the formlessness advanced by Eustratius's opponents. When Sophronius described the apparition which he received of another saint only a few days later, he reasserted the identity between the saints' physical appearance *post mortem* and their iconographical representations. This time it was St Thomas the Apostle, with whose appearance Sophronius was familiar from the apostle's images in Damascus. Thus, Sophronius 'recognized the saint from his cloak, his form and from all of the peculiarities of his appearance.'[280] With Eustratius, therefore, Sophronius appears to have agreed that the forms in which the saints appeared were distinctly their own and could not be exchanged or assumed by others; indeed, this was how they could be identified by their supplicants and authentically represented in their images.

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[275] On both the *Miracles of Demetrius* and the *Life of Theodore*, see further Cormack (1985) 42–9, 77.

[276] *Theo*. 139 in Festugière, *Vie*, 110: «*σὺ παγκλέπτης εἶ· καὶ τί ποιεῖς ὧδε, εἰ μὴ ἵνα τίποτε κλέψῃς;*» Cf. Dawes and Baynes, *Byzantine Saints*, 178.

[277] See further Cormack (1985) 38–9. Note also a similar story from the same period told in respect of Sabrisho I (596–604), Catholicos of the dyophysite church of Persia: see the opening paragraph of the conclusion to this book.

[278] Note also the image miracles in *Theo*. 8 and 108 [Festugière].

There are other examples. When St Cyrus appeared to the mother of a sick girl to dissuade her from taking the girl to Alexandria's Hippocratic doctors, although she saw Cyrus in a doctor's surgery (indicating his medical expertise), he was dressed as a monk. Sophronius's comment is important: 'he was a monk and must for ever appear in the form of a monk'.[281] Similarly, when Cyrus appeared to a paralytic who had come to the saints' shrine from

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[279] *CyrJoh* 70 in Fernandez-Marcos, *Thaumata*, 70.110–12 (Gascou, *Sophrone*, 223): *οὐχ ἑτέροις χρώμενοι σχήμασιν, οὐκ ἐν μορφαῖς ἀλλοτρίαις φαινόμενοι, ἀλλ' ἐν αἷς ὑπῆρχον καὶ γράφονται.*

[280] *CyrJoh* 70.19 in Fernandez-Marcos, *Thaumata*, 70.159–61 (Gascou, *Sophrone*, 224–5): *καὶ γνωρίσας τὸν ἅγιον ἔκ τε τῆς στολῆς, ἔκ τε τῆς μορφῆς, καὶ παντὸς τοῦ περὶ τὴν μορφὴν ἰδιώματος* [. . .].

[281] *CyrJoh* 10 in Fernandez-Marcos, *Thaumata*, 10.47–8 (Gascou, *Sophrone*, 50): *μοναστὴς γὰρ ἐγένετο, καὶ μοναστῶν ἀεὶ ὀφείλεται φαίνεσθαι σχήματι.*

Constantinople, Sophronius again specified that, 'the martyr Cyrus appeared to the sick man in the form of a monk (ἐν μοναχοῦ σχήματι).'[282] And when both Sts Cyrus and John appeared to a demoniac at the shrine, Sophronius's terms aped Eustratius's when he certified that it was 'by employing their personal figures, not foreign ones'.[283] Elsewhere, Sophronius asserted that St Theodore could be identified by a supplicant because, in a manner characteristic of his images, the latter apprehended a vision of the saint mounted on horseback holding in his right hand a banner emblazoned with a cross.[284] Indeed, with its reference to a saint on horseback, Sophronius's description recalls the terms used by Eustratius.

Yet the data provided by Sophronius are problematic. Despite Sophronius's seemingly acute desire to affirm the saints always appeared in their own personal likenesses, Cyrus and John occasionally assumed a form that was not theirs at all. Thus on one occasion, Cyrus and John appeared as priests to a miaphysite sub-deacon who was partially blind, promising him that he would receive communion from them and he would be healed, while, on another, the miaphysite Stephen, was visited in two dreams by the saints: in the first, they wore their monastic habits but in the second the saints appeared wearing the garb of the local governor.[285] The ability here of the saints to appear in a different form seems a flagrant breach of Sophronius's own dictum that the saints were under an 'obligation' always to appear in their own likeness. Even in his description of the apparition in which he himself saw the saints, Sophronius described St Cyrus as temporarily assuming the appearance of his master, John Moschus, while St John wore the red stole of the augustal prefect.[286] The saints then conducted a trial in which John (the prefect) accused Cyrus (Sophronius's abba) of having a disciple (Sophronius) who knew Homer! Indeed, in the vision of St Thomas the Apostle that followed, despite Sophronius's initial

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[282] *CyrJoh* 52 in Fernandez-Marcos, *Thaumata*, 52.22–3 (Gascou, *Sophrone*, 184): Κῦρος ὁ μάρτυς ἐν μοναχοῦ σχήματι τῷ νοσοῦντι παρίσταται [. . .].

[283] *CyrJoh* 14 in Fernandez-Marcos, *Thaumata*, 14.31–3 (Gascou, *Sophrone*, 65): ταῖς οἰκείαις μορφαῖς, καὶ οὐ ξέναις, χρησάμενοι.

[284] *CyrJoh* 8. See Gascou, *Sophrone*, 43 n. 214: 'L'idée est [. . .] que l'enseigne crucifère de Théodore Statélate, qui est son attribut consacré, est aussi pour Christodôros une signe de reconnaissance indubitable'. See Fig. 6.

[285] *CyrJoh* 37–8.

[286] *CyrJoh* 70.

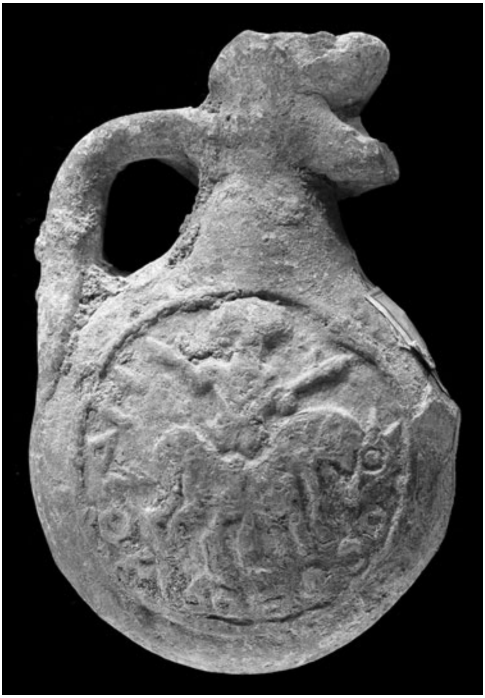

Fig. 6. Egyptian pilgrims' flask depicting St Theodore, *c.* 480–650. © 2009 Musée du Louvre/Georges Poncet.

insistence upon having recognized Thomas because of his appearance, Sophronius suggested that the person he saw might actually have been 'Cyrus assuming Thomas's form' (*εἴτε Κύρου τοῦ μάρτυρος* [. . .] *εἰς τὸν Ἀπόστολον ἑαυτὸν σχηματίσαντος*), although he seems to have concluded that it was 'rather the Apostle Thomas accompanying the martyr Cyrus' (*εἴτε Θωμᾶ μᾶλλον τοῦ ἀποστόλου τυγχάνοντος καὶ συνόντος Κύρου τοῦ μάρτυρος*).[287]

The contention that the saints' icons represented an exact likeness of the saints' earthly appearance was also important to later defenders of the cult of icons and a direct link between the sixth- and seventh-century debate on the saints sketched here and the eighth-century iconoclast controversy has been suggested.[288] The stories from the *Miracles of Cosmas and Damian* and the *Miracles of Artemius* above, like the story of Arete in the *Miracles of Anastasius the Persian*, were read out in support of image veneration at the Second Council of Nicaea in 787. Because of their value to the iconophile cause, however, many of these stories are sometimes dismissed as interpolations.[289] But the argument that references to images in hagiographical texts produced before the end of the seventh century should be treated as interpolations *a priori* overlooks the fundamental role that images played in the operations of the shrine-based cult of deceased saints attested in sixth- and seventh-century sources, literary and archaeological.[290] It would have been exceedingly difficult to have had a cult of saints in which visions of the saints or other holy subjects were accepted as regular phenomena without the existence and widespread diffusion of standardized iconographical representations of the saints that allowed the visionary subject to be imagined and identified. Precisely because such images gave a visible bodily form to the subject whose personal visitation was being sought at a shrine, Christian representations of the saints in the context of incubation were from the beginning, in a very real sense, naturally images of presence, to which prayers could be addressed and, ultimately offerings made.[291] But in a society where, as we have seen, these apparitions were themselves contested, references in early Byzantine hagiography to the correspondence between a saint's appearance in his image and his likeness in an apparition can additionally be read as an attempt to rebut contemporary, rationalist-inspired arguments against the plausibility of such apparitions.[292] From this perspective, such references emerge as an integral element of a discursive arsenal that was intended (with however much circularity) to vindicate the authenticity of the pilgrim's experience against detractors. Indeed, Eustratius's belief that the saints retained their earthly appearance *post mortem* in a way that, by following in reverse the logic sketched here, authenticated their images undoubtedly explains the attractiveness of *On the State of Souls* to the defenders of image veneration during the eighth century.[293] What had shifted was the focus of the debate: from the plausibility of the apparition (during the later sixth and seventh centuries), to the legitimacy of the image that had been held to authenticate it (during iconoclasm).

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[287] *CyrJoh* 70 in Fernandez-Marcos, *Thaumata*, 70.168–72 (Gascou, *Sophrone*, 225). See also Sansterre (1991) 78: 'L'embarras du commentaire est révélateur. À un moment essential de l'incubation, le malade n'a pas bénéficié de l'épiphanie classique; un saint qui lui était plus familier est apparu à la place du maître du lieu'.

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[288] See Dagron (1992) 66, col. 2. See also Auzépy (1995) 37–9. On the origins of iconoclasm, see also the important study of Cameron (1992*c*).

[289] See van den Ven (1955–7); Kitzinger (1954) 107 n. 89, 109 n. 98; Speck (1991) 226–8; Haldon (1997a) 35; and Brubaker (1998) 1219, 1233–4.

[290] See also Dagron (1978) 98–9.

[291] See Belting (1990) 76–87, 103–12, for sixth and seventh-century images of the saints. On the offerings that could be made to them, see for examples from images of Mary, see Barber (2000) and Nordhagen (2000) 121–3.

[292] For this argument, see also a fragmentary text attributed to John of Thessalonica and cited at the Second Council of Nicaea: I. D. Mansi, *Sacrorum conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio*, XIII. The Greek is reprinted in Thümmel (1992) 327–8, with a complete German translation at 112–13. There is an abridged English version in Mango (1986) 140–1.

DOUBTING THE MIRACLES OF THE SAINTS

It has been said that '[s]ixth-century Christians inhabited a world in which the miraculous was possible, and they employed many technologies for securing divine assistance'.[294] This is certainly true. But a close reading of contemporary hagiography has revealed how frequently those who extolled the saints' wonders seem to have been compelled to vindicate the reality of their miracles against sceptical audiences. Indeed, from the end of the sixth to the beginning of the seventh century, scepticism towards the cult of the saints was almost endemic on the part of the citizens of the 'God-guarded empire'.[295] This more generalized context of doubt, particularly towards the miraculous, represents the broader setting within which Eustratius and Gregory's defence of the saints' miracles must be considered.[296]

The texts discussed in this chapter suggest that the audiences of early Byzantine hagiography, and especially their frequent scepticism regarding the saints' miracles, played an important role in shaping hagiographical discourse in a number of Lives and miracle collections from the end of the sixth and the beginning of the seventh centuries.

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[293] Constas (2002) 284.

[294] Krueger (2005) 305.

[295] See Dal Santo (2011*c*).

[296] Claims to work miracles were always perilous. A monk who promised but failed to raise a dead corpse at the Third Council of Constantinople (680–1) was denounced and punished: Hatlie (2008) 225.

Hagiographers appear to have framed their narratives as if they were responding to their audiences' doubts concerning the saints' miracles and condition *post mortem*. By resisting the view of the saints championed by Eustratius and others, early Byzantine society forced hagiographers either to renounce or redouble their efforts, indirectly encouraging them to go to ever greater lengths to 'prove' the reality of the saints' miracles and the saints' autonomy from the angels in the next life. A story from Anastasius of Sinai's *Beneficial Tales* serves as a counterpoint to those we have seen. In it Anastasius recapitulated his opinion, clearly expressed in his *Questions and Answers*, that the saints' souls were to all intents and purposes inactive *post mortem*, and that the operations normally attributed to them by the faithful actually represented the product of the intervention of angels.[297] Thus, when he related the apparition of the souls of Christian martyrs that took place at the moment of the death of an aged ascetic who died at Sinai, Anastasius commented: 'In my view, at least, these were angelic powers appearing in the form of the holy fathers (*δυνάμεις τινὲς ὑπῆρχον ἀγγελικαί, ἐν σχήματι ὀφθεῖσαι τῶν ἁγίων πατέρων*) who struggled in that place and were wreathed with the crown of victory, in order to honour the one who had imitated their ways and provide an escort for him who displayed love and faith towards God beyond that of the saints who went before him.'[298]

The pressure exerted upon hagiographers to distinguish clearly the saints' activities from those of other heavenly beings, especially angels', is potentially suggested by other evidence as well. Certain ways of describing the saints seem to have fallen out of use during the sixth century, perhaps under the influence of the debates which this study has already underlined. A historical counterpoint is provided by the early sixth-century *Life of Daniel the Stylite* († 493), where the hagiographer frequently referred to the saint as 'Your angel'—*ὁ ἄγγελος σοῦ, ὁ σός ἄγγελος*. This reflects a supposedly common form of address from early Christian correspondence, possibly connected to Jewish and Christian beliefs about angels that allowed a person to be identified with their guardian 'angel'.[299] According to Grégoire, the usage fell out of favour during the Origenist controversy of the first half of the sixth century owing to the condemnation of Origen's (supposed) belief in the transformation of the souls of Christian deceased into angels. Moreover, 'if it seemed excessive to identify the souls of the faithful deceased with the angels, it was even more daring to greet the angel in a living Christian, even if he were a saint.'[300] Indeed, the appearance of this form of address in the late fifth- or early sixth-century *Life of Daniel the Stylite* is among the last in Christian hagiography, its abandonment possibly corresponding to hagiographers' increasing desire to delineate far more stringently the precise intercessory roles of the saints and the angels in controversy concerning the reality of the *post-mortem* activity of the former.[301]

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[297] See above all Flusin (1991); also Dagron (1992) 62 col. 2.

[298] Nau (1902*b*) 48. The Greek can be found in Nau (1902*a*) 89: *Οἵτινες καθάπερ ἔγωγε οἶμαι, δυνάμεις τινὲς ὑπῆρχον ἀγγελικαί, ἐν σχήματι ὀφθεῖσαι τῶν ἁγίων πατέρων, τῶν ἐνταῦθα καλῶς ἀγωνισαμένων καὶ τὸν στέφανον τῆς νίκης ἀναδησαμένων, τιμῶσαι καὶ δορυφοροῦσαι καλῶς, τὸν ἐν τοῖς τόποις αὐτῶν μιμησάμενον τοὺς τρόπους αὐτών, καὶ δείξαντος πρὸς θεὸν στοργὴν και πίστιν ὑπὲρ τοὺς πρώην δικαίους.*

However much their partisans might have wished to present them as moral exemplars for Christian society at large, or as guarantors through their posthumous intercessions of the unending mandate on earth of the Christian empire, even into the seventh century the authority of the saints' cult was clearly not always assured. A story from the *Miracles of Artemius* at Constantinople recalled those of Arete in Palestine and Athanasia at Alexandria. Peter, a recalcitrant monk, was non-committal about saintly veneration. When ordered by his abbot to take a brother named Andrew to Artemius's shrine to be healed of a testicular complaint, Peter objected, and, 'pursing his lips and shutting his eyes and shaking his head, [he] remained silent and made no reply'.[302] Artemius intervened, however, and transferred Andrew's swollen genitals to Peter.[303] When Peter remembered 'the doubt which he experienced in the abbot's presence [. . .] before they came to the saint', he made amends for his scepticism by

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[299] Grégoire (1929–30).

[300] Grégoire (1929–30) 644.

[301] But note that Symeon the Younger was sometimes described as leading 'an angelic life on earth': the *Life of St Symeon the Younger*, cc. 1, 16.

[302] *Art.* 37 in *Artemios*, Crisafulli and Nesbitt (eds.), 193–4: *ὁ δὲ χεῖλος πρὸς χεῖλος συνάψας καὶ τὰ ὄμματα μύσας καὶ τὴν κεφαλὴν δονήσας ἔμεινεν σιγερός, μηδὲν ἀποκριθείς.*

[303] Healing disorders of the male genitals was Artemius's speciality. See Alwis (2007).

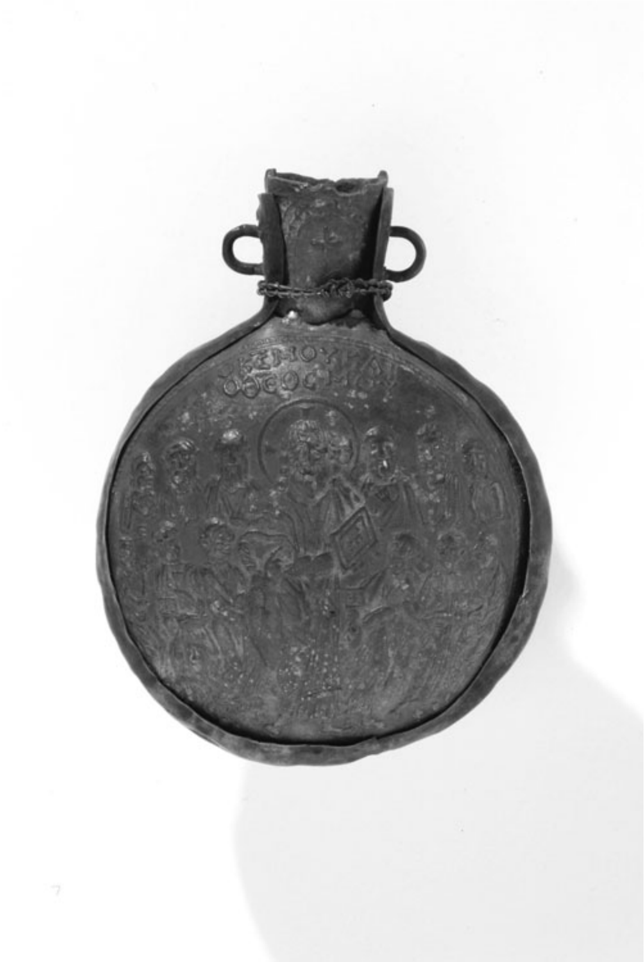

Fig. 7. Palestinian ampolla depicting the Disbelief of St Thomas. Late sixth/early seventh century. Photo: Pietro Pozzi. © Museo e Tesoro del Duomo di Monza.

venerating Artemius and anointed himself with oil from the lamps at the shrine.[304] Like the repentant sceptics before him, he was healed immediately.

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[304] *Art.* 37 in *Artemios*, Crisafulli and Nesbitt (eds.), 197: *καὶ παραχρῆμα ἀναμνησθεὶς τῆς ἀμφιβολίας ἧς ἔσχεν* [. . .] *παρὰ τῷ ἡγουμένῳ, πρὶν ἐλθεῖν αὐτοὺς πρὸς τὸν ἅγιον* [. . .]’.

To conclude, therefore, the stories explored in the foregoing chapter offer the historian a precious insight into the operation of the saints' cult in the early Byzantium and the fierceness with which saintly veneration was both contested and defended. They exemplify the divergent voices that were raised against saints' cults during the last quarter of the sixth and the first quarter of the seventh centuries (*c.* 575–625), a period that is usually considered to have represented an advanced stage of the many-sided and far from uniform process known, for better or worse, as the Christianization of classical Mediterranean society.[305] '[T]here can be no doubt', wrote Baynes, 'that the Byzantine lived in a world where miracle could and did happen, and that belief in miracle is itself a fact of history which the student ignores at his peril.'[306] But perhaps this has been overstated. Among the finely crafted flasks brought back *circa* 600 by an Italian pilgrim to the Holy Land are two that feature Jesus' post-Resurrection apparition to Thomas, the apostle who doubted.[307] 'Because you have seen me, you have believed', Jesus is recorded to have said to St Thomas, and famously, 'blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed' (John. 20.29). Yet in the pilgrimage arts of early Byzantium, scenes from the Gospel often reflect aspects of the pilgrim experience itself.[308] An admonition and ongoing physical reminder to the pilgrim to believe despite not having seen, the Doubting Thomas *eulogia* gives prominence to a subject, doubt, rarely discussed by historians of the religion of the age. This fact is all the more significant given that, behind the orderly equilibrium of heaven and earth proclaimed by early Byzantium's shimmering mosaics, there stood a world of lively and uncertain debate regarding the holy subjects they depicted.[309] Exactly why this might have been so will be considered further below, but first it is necessary to look at developments in the cult of the saints east of the empire's frontier on the Euphrates.

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[305] See esp. Dagron (1977).

[306] Baynes (1955) 248.

[307] See Fig. 7; and Grabar (1958) and Vikan (1982) 24–5.

[308] See Vikan (1990) and (1991).

[309] Compare Brown (1971*b*) 182: 'The world of the late sixth and seventh centuries [. . .] achieved this "focused", stable quality – at least in men's imaginations.'

4

The saints' inactivity *post mortem*

Soul sleep and the cult of saints east of the Euphrates

TIMOTHY I AND THE EAST SYRIAN SYNOD OF 790

In May 790 a Christian synod was held in Baghdad.[1] Its president was the learned Timothy I (*c.* 727/8-823), since 780 East Syrian (or 'Nestorian') Catholicos or Patriarch of Seleucia-Ctesiphon, head of the so-called 'Church of the East', the most numerically significant Christian community of the old Sasanian empire of Persia and now, following the seventh-century conquests of the Arabs, of the Islamic caliphate.[2] Indeed, in order to improve his access to the secular authorities, Timothy had, following Caliph al-Mansur's (754–775) foundation of Baghdad in 762 as the dynastic capital of the Abbasid empire, removed the patriarch's residence from ancient Seleucia to the city where our synod took place.[3] Among other things, the synod discussed the controversial beliefs of a certain Nestorius, newly consecrated bishop of Beth Nuhadran in Upper Mesopotamia and formerly a priest and monk of the monastery of Mar-Jozadaq.[4] Arraigned before an assembly of East Syrian churchmen from across the Caliphate, Bishop Nestorius publicly denounced the serious doctrinal errors of which he had been accused. The acts of this synod which survive today record his recantation of heresy as follows:

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[1] See Braun (1902*b*).

[2] For an introduction to the Church of the East traditionally known in the west as 'Nestorian', see Brock (1996), which impressively dispels a number of myths. Its liturgical language was (and is) Syriac, a dialect of Aramaic originally spoken at Edessa in late antiquity. 'East Syrian' will be the adjective used here to designate the dyophysite Church of the East and to distinguish this community from the 'West Syrian' ('Jacobite') church which also used Syriac for liturgical and theological purposes, but which held to a miaphysite position in matters of Christology. For the separation of these communities over the course of the fifth and sixth centuries, see Van Rompay (2005).

[3] The official title head of the Church of the East was 'Catholicos-Patriarch' from the catholicate of Aba I the Great (540–52): Fiey (1970) 80–3. As East Syrian authors generally refer to the bishop of Seleucia-Ctesiphon-Baghdad as simply 'catholicos', this will be the convention used here. For Timothy's biography, see Berti (2009) 135–93; also Putman (1975) 13–23; and Bidawid (1956) 1–11.

> I, Nestorius, priest and monk of the monastery of Mar-Jozadaq, confess that I, in the presence of the Holy Father of the community, Mar Timothy, Catholicos and Patriarch, was called to the work of service of the bishopric of Beth Nuhudran. But, as ignoble rumours and evil lies concerning me have been brought before His Holiness, the holy Catholicos has demanded from my hand an apology and a statement so that I may appear free from and innocent of their foul accusations; an apology, that is, on account of the defamatory accusations that have been brought against me before His Holiness by open mouths and unbridled tongues; and a statement on account of the maintenance of the faith which reigns in the whole catholic Church and which has gone out from the beginning, as well as on account of the observance of the godly commandments and precepts that were set forth and delivered to us from the mouth of our Lord Jesus Christ.[5]

Bishop Nestorius then began his confession of orthodox belief in the strongly dyophysite Christology of the Church of the East, dictated by Catholicos Timothy. He thus anathematized all heresies, including all those who 'toyed' with Christ's divinity and humanity, whether they acknowledged 'one Nature and one Person', as did the 'Severians' ('Jacobites' or Syrian Orthodox), or 'one Person in two natures', according to the 'stupidities of all those who gathered in Chalcedon' who 'err[ed] in equal measure both from each other and from the truth'.[6]

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[4] For the location of Beth Nuhadran and Mar-Jozadaq, see Fiey (1965), II, 321–53 and 692–4 respectively. Nestorius was possibly the sixth 'Nestorian' bishop of Beth Nuhadran, and was consecrated in 790: ibid., 342.

[5] Braun (1902*b*) 303: 'Ich Nestorius, Priester und Mönch aus dem Kloster des Mâr Jôzâdâq bekenne, daß ich gegenwärtig vor dem Heiligen, dem Vater der Gemeinschaft, Mâr Timotheos, dem Katholikos Patriarchen zum Werke des Dienstes des Episkopates von Bêth Nûhâdran berufen wurde. Da aber von Manchen vor seiner Heiligkeit über mich unnoble Gerüchte und böse Reden vorgebracht wurden, verlangte der Mâr Katholikos aus meiner Hand eine Apologie und ein Protokoll, damit ich frei und rein erscheine von ihren verunreinigenden Anklagen und zwar eine Apologie wegen der ehrenrührigen Anklagen, die von offenen Mäulerin und zügellosen Zungen vor seiner Heiligkeit gegen mich vorgebracht wurden, ein Protokoll, wegen der Aufrechthaltung des Glaubens, der in der ganzen katholischen Kirche herrscht und vom Anfange an ausgeht, sowie wegen der Beobachtung der göttlichlen Befehle und Gebote, die von dem Leben gebenden Munde unseres Herrn und Gottes, Jesus Christus, bestimmt und überliefert wurden.'

But the culmination of Nestorius's confession of true doctrine arguably came when the bishop of Beth-Nuhadran was forced to make a statement that confirmed that he shared the received East Syrian view of the afterlife. In particular, he was obliged to affirm his belief in the *inactivity* of all human souls between death and the Resurrection. To some extent, Bishop Nestorius's final anathema closely echoed the debate on the condition of the disembodied human soul *post mortem*, its ongoing activity or effective inertia, that we observed, some two centuries earlier, in Eustratius's *On the State of Souls* and Gregory the Great's *Dialogues*. Only Eustratius and Gregory, defenders, as we have seen, of the vigorous ministrations of the saints on behalf of the living from beyond the grave, would have been alarmed by the 'orthodoxy' that Bishop Nestorius was constrained to endorse. He affirmed that '[a]t the same time [I anathematize] all those who say that souls feel, know, act, praise [God] or have use [of intercessions] after their departure from the body. For, no such thing comes to them until they put on their bodies [once again].'[7]

In other words, the East Syrian synod of 790 repudiated the very doctrines concerning the posthumous activity of human souls and the efficacy of the church's prayer for the dead that Eustratius and Gregory had so vehemently defended at the end of the sixth century apparently against those who sought to undermine both of these things on account of the inactivity of the soul that necessarily followed upon its separation from the body. As we shall see, this did not mean that the cult of the saints and prayer for the dead were either any less important or contested in the Syriac world of the Church of the East than they were in sixth- and seventh-century Byzantium. But this distinctive view of the 'sleep' or posthumous inactivity of the disembodied human soul theoretically did entail important consequences for the veneration of saints and prayer for the dead in the East Syrian tradition.[8] By the eighth century, if not earlier, 'orthodoxy' in respect of these matters had emerged, in at least one of the two major Christian churches 'east of the Euphrates', as more or less diametrically opposed to the view of the saints' full-blooded activity beyond the grave that Eustratius, Gregory, and a host of other writers had propounded within the frontiers of the Roman empire. This fact in itself suggests the malleability of Christian eschatological teaching during this period in late antiquity. It is thus in order to situate both Eustratius and Gregory's apologies in favour of the saints' miracles and the soul's posthumous activity within a wider process of doctrinal formation in early medieval Christianity across the Mediterranean world and the Near East that this chapter will sketch how and why the Church of the East authorized a radically different view of the afterlife in the centuries before, during and after the Latin and Greek writers we have already considered, developed their views at Rome, Constantinople, and elsewhere.[9]

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[6] For a history of the Christology of the Church of the East, see Brock (1985*b*). On relations between it and the imperial church at Constantinople during the sixth century, see Guillaumont (1969–70). At the end of the century, Patriarch John the Faster of Constantinople received Catholicos Ishoyahb I (582–96), official envoy to Emperor Maurice from Shah Hormizd IV (579–90). In 630, Heraclius received communion from Ishoyahb II (628–46), leader of Queen Boran's peace delegation: Baum and Winkler (2000) 36, 40. Ishoyahb II's act of communion with Heraclius stoked controversy within his own church, and the Catholicos was reprimanded upon his return to Persia: Guillaumont (1969–70) 52.

[7] Braun (1902*b*) 309: 'Ebenso die jenigen, welche sagen, daß die Seelen nach ihrem Ausgang aus dem Leibe fühlen, wissen, wirken, [Gott] loben oder [von Fürbitten?] Nutzen haben. Denn nichts solches kommt ihnen zu, bis sie ihre Leibe [wieder] anziehen.'

Returning to Timothy I's Baghdad, it is clear that, at the end of the eighth century, Bishop Nestorius was not alone in expounding 'unorthodox' views on the activity of souls after death. According to Ishodenah, bishop of Basra, and author of the *Book of Chastity*, a monastic chronicle composed *circa* 900, Bishop Nestorius was the disciple of a mystic named Joseph Hazzayah ('the Seer') (b. *c.* 710), the son of a Persian *magus* and a Zoroastrian convert to East Syrian Christianity.[10] Beginning his career as a monk in upper Mesopotamia (where Beth Nuhadra was located), Joseph died as the superior of the monastery of Rabban Boktisho in the Zinai mountains around 786/7. In a letter addressed shortly thereafter to the synod at Baghdad in 790, Catholicos Timothy recalled his previous anathematization of Joseph for holding 'Origenistic' beliefs in the pre-existence of the soul and

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[8] An introduction to the origins of Syriac Christianity can be found in Murray (1975) 4–38. For the Sasanian period, see esp. Labourt (1904).

[9] For exchange between the Roman and Syriac-speaking worlds in late antiquity from a very different perspective, see Peeters (1950).

[10] See Guillaumont (1958).

('related to this but, it would seem, more fiercely contested in his time', according to Guillaumont) in the *post-mortem* activity of the soul before the Resurrection.[11] In Guillaumont's view, it is the advantage of this source to demonstrate how far Catholicos Timothy 'made himself the defender of the thesis known by the name of 'hypnopsychie' (or 'soul sleep') by condemning those who believed that the soul, in its provisional state of separation from the body, continued to enjoy the senses and its other faculties.'[12] This testimony appears to be corroborated by the fact that the Arabic acts of the 790 synod stated that the assembled fathers approved Timothy's doctrine against Joseph Hazzayah and his disciple, Nestorius. In fact, the canonization of the *post-mortem* inactivity of souls prior to the Resurrection signified that, in the words of the canons, 'after their separation from the body, souls are bereft of all their senses, until such time as they are returned to their bodies'.[13]

From almost the beginning of Timothy's patriarchate (780–823), therefore, 'soul sleep', the posthumous inactivity of human souls prior to the Resurrection, represented an integral element of the received eschatology of the East Syrian Church, the church of the old Persian empire. But, clearly, the alternative view of the ongoing vitality of the soul was not unknown. What, therefore, prompted the Church of the East to turn away from this eschatological paradigm and seek instead to entrench another which, at least *a priori*, appears much more difficult to reconcile to the same cult of the saints and liturgical commemoration of the dead that this church shared with Christian communities further west? In what follows, it will be demonstrated that the *post-mortem* inactivity of souls was far from being, at the end of the eighth century, a recent development in the East Syrian view of the afterlife: rather, its roots sank deep into its ancient Syriac culture, heavily imbued as it was with the Old Testament concept of Sheol and the New Testament expectation of bodily resurrection. The notion of soul sleep was in this sense traditional in Syriac-speaking Christianity.

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[11] The precise origins of Joseph's view of the soul cannot be verified thanks to the loss of the Life that Nestorius of Beth Nuhadra composed in his honour: Guillaumont (1958) 16.

[12] Guillaumont (1958) 10: '[le patriarche Timothée] se fait le défenseur de la thèse connue sous le nom de l' « hypnopsychie » (« ou sommeil de l'âme ») et il condamne ceux qui pensent que l'âme, dans l'état provisoire de séparation d'avec le corps, continue à jouir de sa sensibilité et de ses autres facultés.'

[13] Guillaumont (1958) 10.

But it would be difficult to imagine any cultural tradition as immune to the influence of external currents in the rich world of late antiquity—and, certainly, the efforts of the fathers of Baghdad to stamp out competing views shows that, even in the East Syrian church, the sleep of the soul was not hegemonic. Beginning with Ephrem the Syrian († 373) and Narsai of Nisibis († *circa* 503) and concluding with the writings of Ishai of Seleucia-Ctesiphon and Catholicos Timothy I, therefore, this chapter will argue that there existed, between the end of the sixth and the beginning of the ninth centuries, in the eastern Mediterranean world and its Near Eastern hinterland, a protracted debate about the nature of the human soul and its relationship to the body that carried far-reaching consequences for the history of Christian doctrine and practice. Conducted in remarkably similar terms from Rome and Constantinople to Baghdad, this debate carried with it important ramifications for the East Syrian understanding of the nature of the saints' miracles and that church's ritual care for the dead.[14] Naturally, there can be no doubt that, during late antiquity, the dyophysite, Aramaic-speaking, Christian communities of first the Sasanian and then the Arab empires honoured their holy dead, both martyrs and ascetics alike.[15] Nevertheless, the meaning of this cult in the East Syrian church was, like the favours which East Syrian Christians expected from their saints beyond the grave, not contiguous in all respects from that which we have observed in the Roman world, east of the Euphrates.[16] Neither, as we shall see, was the cult itself free from contestation.

Before we proceed any further, however, a brief caveat will be offered. In Chapter Two of this book, it was suggested that the debate about the ongoing activity or otherwise of the disembodied human soul *post mortem*, which was perceived as being such a potential threat to the plausible operation of the cult of the saints, may have owed its origins, at least in part, to a revival of interest in Aristotelian psychology. The latter, it was argued, offered an account of the relationship between soul and body that could be construed as incompatible with Christian belief in the soul's separability and its essential independence of the body's physical substrate, which, in Aristotle's view, conversely remained all important. In this chapter, as we shall see, it could be argued that the Church of the East responded very differently to the sixth-century 'rediscovery' of Aristotelian philosophy, in which it participated through a substantial translation movement from Greek into Syriac from the sixth century.[17] Indeed, it has been alleged before that '[t]he Nestorian doctrine of soul sleep, from the seventh century on, is built upon Aristotelian psychology'.[18] It is also true that there is a striking degree of complementarity between a certain reading of Aristotle's *De Anima*, and a number of intriguing parallels occasionally emerge between it and the Syriac-language texts on the afterlife and the cult of the saints we shall consider below. Yet any direct influence is exceedingly difficult to support before the end of our period as *De Anima* was not translated into Syriac until the end of the ninth century.[19] How much if anything the East Syrian view of the fundamental inactivity of the disembodied human soul owed to Aristotle at any point in late antiquity is not at all clear in view of the strong affirmations of this doctrine already present in the tradition from a very early date and which are often taken as a direct inheritance from Judaism.[20]

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[14] On the Christians of Iran and the non-Roman Near East as part of a 'Byzantine commonwealth', see Fowden (1993) 121–4.

[15] See, for example, Fiey (1986); Hunter (1993); Gignoux (2000); Walker (2006) 87–120, 246–79; and Payne (2011).

[16] Bruns (2006) 202. The relative scarcity of especially posthumous miracles in East Syrian hagiography has been noted before. See Gignoux (2000): 'Les miracles *in vita* sont assurément plus nombreux, tandis que ceux *post mortem* le sont moins, les hagiographes étant apparemment moins intéressés par ce type de miracles.' Note also the apparent absence of portable reliquaries in the modern Church of the East, a feature from early medieval times of both the Latin west and Coptic Egypt: Fiey (1986) 187.

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[17] See Brock (1982*a*); also Troupeau (1991); and Klinge (1939). For a survey of Aristotelian works translated into Syriac, see Duval (1907) 246–58. This should now be supplemented with Hugonnard-Roche (2004).

[18] Gavin (1920) 116; and more generally, Vööbus (1965) 21: 'Aristotelian philosophy [was] the lasting foundation of the theological thought of the Syrians'.

[19] See Klinge (1939) 359, 368–70.

[20] On Syriac Christianity's Judaic heritage, see Murray (1982) and (1975) 4–10; also Brock (1979) esp. 231–2.

EPHREM THE SYRIAN AND THE ORIGINS OF SYRIAC TRADITION OF SOUL SLEEP

The *post-mortem* sleep of souls already appeared in two of the earliest Syriac writers whose works have come down to us, namely Ephrem the Syrian (*c.* 306–73) and Aphrahat 'the Wise' or 'the Persian' (*fl. c.* 300).[21] Living in a period before the divisive Christological disputes of the fifth century, Ephrem was received as a saint and doctor of distinction in both the later 'East' and 'West' Syrian communities and also commanded a distinguished reputation among Christians—Latin and Greek—west of the Euphrates.[22] Indeed, it is worth noting that Eustratius employed works attributed to him to defend the church's ritual care of the dead and the efficacy of the Eucharist as an aid to the souls of the deceased.[23] At first sight, this is curious since Ephrem has usually been characterized as teaching a highly Judaic or ancient Christian view of the afterlife according to which the souls of the deceased descended into 'Sheol', a region by and large of darkness and apparent inactivity.[24] Deacon and teacher in the church at Nisibis before relocating to Edessa after the former city was ceded to the Persians in 363, Ephrem understood that the souls of all the deceased slept in Sheol until the Resurrection of the body. Apparently following the Old Testament in this matter, Ephrem, 'one of the least hellenized of all early Christian writers', believed that, during this time, they were inactive but, of course, not non-existent: the soul was conscious of itself, but of nothing beyond it, lacking the use of its perceptive faculties through the absence of the body.[25] The most important text for Ephrem's eschatology is his *Hymns on Paradise*.[26] In these hymns, Ephrem engaged speculatively with all of the major themes of Syriac psychology and eschatology that would be treated at greater length by later writers.[27] By considering Ephrem, the views of these later East Syrian theologians can be seen as a development out of a continuous 'Oriental' Christian tradition, the essential substance of which (viz., the inactivity of the soul without the body, the slumber of the saints' souls prior to the Resurrection) the writings of Ephrem's elder contemporary, Aphrahat, also affirmed.[28] This ancient tradition continued to shape East Syrian accounts of the cult of the saints and prayer for the dead into the eighth century.

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[21] On Ephrem, see above all Brock (1985*a*); also Murray (1975) 29–33. On Aphrahat, see M.-J. Pierre, 'Introduction' in *Aphrahate le Sage Persan: Les Exposés*, M.-J. Pierre (trans.) SC 349 and 359 (Paris, 1988–9) = SC 349:33–199; also, P. Bruns, 'Einleitung', in *Aphrahat: Unterweisungen*, P. Bruns (trans.), 2 vols., Fontes Christiani (Freiburg, 1991), 35–73. Lacking space to treat Aphrahat separately, I shall note Aphrahat's concordance with Ephrem where appropriate. His *Demonstrations* were written as two separate cycles in 336–7 and 343–4, probably in the vicinity of the Sasanian city of Ninevah-Mosul (Mar Mattaï) where Aphrahat possibly served as bishop: Pierre, 'Introduction', SC 349:35–6, 41–2; Bruns, 'Einleitung', 41–7. Beyond this, Aphrahat's dates and biographical details remain uncertain.

[22] See Brock (1989).

[23] Eustratius of Constantinople, *Stat. anim.* (CCG 60: 2529–63).

[24] Gavin (1920) 105. In the Christian Old Testament, for example, the Psalmist was appalled at the utter separation from God that death seemed to foreshadow: 'Do you show your wonders to the dead? Do those who are dead rise up and praise you? Is your love declared in the grave, your faithfulness in destruction? Are your wonders known in the place of darkness, or your righteous deeds in the land of oblivion?' (Ps 88. 10–12). Instead, his desire was to 'see the glory of the Lord in the land of the living' (Ps 27.13).

Yet Ephrem's meditations on the afterlife were motivated by their author's engagement with the problems apparently embedded in his tradition. Ephrem confessed that both joy and anxiety accompanied his consideration of Jesus' words to the thief on the cross, 'Today you will be with me in Paradise'.[29] Ephrem was comforted since the Lord's acceptance of the thief's repentance proclaimed the possibility of salvation for even the worst of sinners:

> There came to my ear from the Scripture that had been read
> a word that caused me joy on the subject of the Thief;

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[25] Brock (1985*a*) 123. See also Séd (1968) and Ortiz de Urbina (1955) 468. Aphrahat's views were similar: *Exp*. 8.20 (SC 349:465): 'Notre foi nous montre ainsi que, lorsque les hommes sont couchés, ils dorment de ce sommeil et ne discernent pas le bien du mal. Les justes ne reçoivent pas ce qui leur a été promis, ni les impies le châtiment du mal, avant que ne vienne le Juge, et qu'il ne sépare la droite de la gauche'. For commentary, see Pierre, 'Introduction', in SC 349:191–9; Bruns, 'Einleitung', 69–70.

[26] Quotations are taken from the English translation provided in S. Brock, *St Ephrem the Syrian: Hymns of Paradise* (New York, 1990). This is based on Dom Edmund Beck's edition of the Syriac in CSCO 174, Scriptores Syri 78 (Louvain, 1957), with a German translation in Scriptores Syri 79. A Latin translation can be found in E. Beck, *Ephraems Hymnen über das Paradies*, Studia Anselmia 26 (Rome, 1951) and French in *Éphrem de Nisibe: Hymnes sur le paradis*, Sources Chrétiennes 137, F. Gaffin (intro.), R. Lavenant (trans.) (Paris, 1968).

[27] Gavin (1920) 103.

[28] Between the fifth and eighth centuries, Aphrahat was sometimes erroneously thought to have been Ephrem's disciple: SC 359:966–83.

[29] Lk 23.43.

> It gave comfort to my soul amidst the multitude of its vices,
> telling how he had compassion on the Thief.[30]

But the precise condition of the Thief's soul *post mortem* presented a bewildering problem for Ephrem's unitary understanding of man.[31] Jesus said that the Thief would be with him that very day in Paradise. But how could this be, before the resurrection of the Thief's body?

> I imagined that he was already there, but then I considered
> how the soul cannot have perception of Paradise
> without its mate, the body, its instrument and lyre. [. . .]
> With respect to the Thief, a dilemma beset me [. . .].[32]

Ephrem went on to employ marriage as a metaphor for describing the mutually dependent relationship that exists between the soul and the body, one which was further developed by later writers, including Narsai of Nisibis.[33]

For Ephrem, the soul's dependence upon the body for the enjoyment of all its perceptive capacities indicated, problematically, that, once deprived of the body's assistance by death, the soul of necessity lost its abilities to see, hear, and profit from its other senses.[34] Ephrem took it for granted that the body must add something to the condition of the soul and it was consequently evident to Ephrem that the soul's condition after the body's death was fundamentally different from the one it enjoyed *ante mortem*:

> That the soul cannot see without the body's frame,
> the body itself persuades,

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[30] Ephrem, *Paradise*, 8.1, Brock (trans.), 131.

[31] A similarly unitary view can be found in Aphrahat, whose apparently tripartite view of man as body-soul-spirit actually reflects 'des modalités du vivant unifié': Pierre, 'Introduction', SC 349:181 : '[i]l y a entre tous ces termes une dynamique de la circulation du sens: ils forment une sorte de "corps logique" que chacun d'eux contribue à construire, mettant en relief tel ou tel aspect [. . .] mais sans l'enfermer dans le circuit fermé de la définition'. Cf. Bruns, 'Einleitung', 67–8.

[32] Ephrem, *Paradise*, 8.2, Brock, (trans.), 131–2.

[33] For Ephrem's generally positive attitude towards the body, see Brock (1985*a*) 22–4.

[34] Aphrahat affirmed that death deprived the sleeping soul of all memory of life in the body: *Exp*. 22.6-10 (SC 359:846–53), esp. 22.6 (SC 359:847): 'Ils ne se souviennent absolumment pas de ce monde, car la Mort leur a fait perdre le sens quand ils sont descendus chez elle'. See also *Exp*. 22.12 (SC 359:853).

> Since if the body becomes blind
>   the soul is blind in it, groping about with it.[35]

Clearly, this point would have been contested by later writers west of the Euphrates, like Eustratius and Gregory, who, minimizing the body's importance to the soul's activity, confidently ascribed full faculties of sense perception to the disembodied souls of the saints.[36] Like Anastasius of Sinai, Ephrem emphasized that the soul's knowledge of the physical world was necessarily mediated by the senses of the physical body, even as the soul imparted perception to the body's physical matter:

> See how each looks and attests to the other,
>   how the body has need of the soul in order to live,
>   and the soul too requires the body in order to see and hear.[37]

For Gregory the Great, as we have seen, the saints' disembodied souls necessarily beheld the souls of their heavenly companions and recognized their personal identity; sinners' souls did likewise. It belonged to the nature essence of their respective eschatological reward or punishment, which souls received immediately following their death. For Eustratius, similarly, the survival of perceptive ability in the saints' disembodied souls was crucial for his defence that the saints were personally responsible for the apparitions which they performed at their shrines. Otherwise, how could they have seen the subjects of their benefactions? Moreover, we have seen that both writers implied that the disembodied soul actually retained the form and visible appearance of the physical, at least in some circumstances. To Ephrem, however, such *post-mortem* sense perception by the disembodied soul was impossible, since souls could neither see nor hear without the help of the body: '[f]or it is through the senses of its companion [the body] that it [the soul] shines forth and becomes evident'.[38]

Occasionally, however, Ephrem did describe the next life in terms which, at least ostensibly, seemed to resemble Gregory's. In one hymn, for example, the righteous were said to 'espy' the wicked and *vice versa*. Again, for Eprhem as for Gregory, the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus was a crucial point of reference, as it would be for later writers in the Syriac tradition, too. He wrote:

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[35] Ephrem, *Paradise*, 8.4, Brock (trans.), 132.

[36] Walker Bynum (1995*b*) 76: 'Although Ephraim [*sic*] sometimes speaks of body and soul as two constituent parts of the self, he often speaks as if body *is* person or self'.

[37] Ephrem, *Paradise*, 8.4, Brock (trans.), 132. For Anastasius, see the appendix below, 344–5.

[38] Ephrem, *Paradise*, 8.6, Brock (trans.), 133.

> The children of light dwell on the heights of Paradise,
> and beyond the Abyss they espy the Rich Man;
> He too, as he raises his eyes, beholds Lazarus,
> and calls out to Abraham to have pity on him.[39]

Ephrem reaffirmed the mutual perception of the wicked and blessed *post mortem* in the following stanza, adding that the presence of the Abyss did not prevent the saints from seeing sinners in hell, but reduced their ability to identify personally those who suffered in it just enough to avoid their feeling any compassion towards them. Even in the next life, the righteous could not be expected to rejoice at the sight of the punishment of their reprobate friends and relatives (for example, 'a mother who had denied Christ, imploring mercy from her son or her maid or daughter, who all had suffered affliction for the sake of Christ's teaching').[40] Thanks to the Abyss, however, the righteous in heaven could see sinners suffering in hell, but not recognize who they were:

> The Abyss severs any love that could act as an intermediary,
> thus preventing the love of the just from being bound to the wicked,
> so that the good should not be tortured by the sight, in Gehenna,
> of their children or brothers or family [. . .].[41]

While the meaning of all this was perhaps purely metaphorical, Ephrem's thoughts here can also be seen to have anticipated the Deacon Peter's query in Gregory's fourth dialogue whether the saints in heaven prayed for the alleviation of the sufferings of the damned.[42]

For Ephrem, as for Gregory, moreover, the sight of the damned suffering in hell would increase the saints' beatitude, for example, in regard to their persecutors:

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[39] Ephrem, *Paradise*, 1.12, Brock (trans.), 82.
[40] Ephrem, *Paradise*, 1.13, Brock (trans.), 82.
[41] Ephrem, *Paradise*, 1.13, Brock (trans.), 82.
[42] See Chapter Two of this book above, 126–8.

> [. . .] the persecuted laugh at their persecutors,
> the afflicted at those who caused them affliction,
> the Prophets at those who stoned them,
> the Apostles at those who crucified them.[43]

As they 'reside in their lofty abode and gaze on the wicked', Ephrem portrayed the saints as wondering why the wicked chose damnation over their blessedness.[44] Conversely, the sight of the saints' blessedness deepened sinners' remorse, who would long for even a diluted measure of the saints' reward in 'some remote corner of Paradise':

> This place, despised and spurned by the denizens of Paradise,
> those who burn in Gehenna hungrily desire;
> Their torment doubles at the sight of its fountains,
> they quiver violently as they stand on the opposite side.[45]

And elsewhere:

> Who can endure to look on both sides,
> whose ears can stand the terrible cries of the wicked who proclaim in Gehenna
> that the Just One is righteous,
> while the good utter praise in the Garden?
> The two sides gaze on each other in amazement,
> the works of each side, revealed, serve to admonish the other.[46]

Must we conclude, therefore, that, in the final reckoning, Ephrem's insistence elsewhere on the soul's fundamental dependence upon the body and its consequent dearth of perceptive faculties after its separation from it actually counted for little when he turned to the task of building a picture of the afterlife?

In fact, the scene Ephrem painted so vividly above represented a time after the soul's resumption of the body. That is to say that, for Ephrem, the mutual recognition of the blessed and the damned took place solely in the fulfilled eschatological reality ushered in by the Resurrection. Prior to that time, the souls of the saints were not truly in Paradise, nor were the souls of the damned in Gehenna.[47] There could be no mutual recognition of the deceased without the essential participation of the body. Returning to the story of the Holy Thief, Ephrem concluded that despite Jesus' promise even the Thief's soul could not yet be in Paradise since Paradise could admit of nothing imperfect and the soul without the body was necessarily incomplete:

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[43] Ephrem, *Paradise*, 1.14, Brock (trans.), 82–3.
[44] Ephrem, *Paradise*, 1.14, Brock (trans.), 82–3.
[45] Ephrem, *Paradise*, 1.17, Brock (trans.), 84.
[46] Ephrem, *Paradise*, 7.29, Brock (trans.), 129–30.

> That blessed abode is in no way deficient,
> for that place is complete and perfected in every way,
> and the soul cannot enter there alone,
> for in such a state it is in everything deficient –
> in sensation and consciousness.[48]

Only together could they constitute the perfected unity of the saved human being worthy of inhabiting the perfect world of Paradise: '[. . .] on the day of Resurrection, the body, with its senses, will enter in as well, once it has been made perfect'.[49] Of course, this did not mean that Ephrem imagined that the soul ceased to exist once the body died; it subsisted in itself, but the quality of its existence was inevitably diminished in view of the absence of the body: 'Though the soul exists of itself and for itself, yet without its companion it lacks true existence; it fully resembles an embryo still in the womb [. . .]'.[50] Rather, as the metaphor of the unborn embryo suggested, during the interim before the Resurrection the soul's activity was in potentiality, extant but suspended in anticipation of the Final Judgement.[51]

Remarkably, this 'being in potentiality' was true even of the saints whose souls—contrary to Gregory's and Eustratius's views on the matter—did not, in Ephrem's understanding, enter heaven immediately *post mortem*. He wrote:

> Thus in the delightful mansions on the borders of Paradise
> do the souls of the just and the righteous abide,
> awaiting there the bodies they love,

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[47] Compare Aphrahat, *Exp*. 8.20 (SC 349:465). Like Ephrem, Aphrahat's eschatology was resolutely Resurrection-orientated: *Exp*. 8.7 (SC 349:448): 'Tous nos pères [. . .] attendaient dans l'espérance de la résurrection et la vivification des morts [. . .]'. Throughout this demonstration, Aphrahat defended the Resurrection against the doctrine's detractors, possibly Manichaeans: Pierre, 'Introduction', SC 349:77–9.

[48] Ephrem, *Paradise*, 8.7, Brock (trans.), 133.

[49] Ephrem, *Paradise*, 8.7, Brock (trans.), 133–4.

[50] Ephrem, *Paradise*, 8.5, Brock, (trans.), 133.

[51] Catholicos Timothy later employed the same analogy: see below, 310–11.

> so that, at the opening of the Garden's gate,
>   both bodies and souls might proclaim amidst Hosannas,
> 'Blessed is He who has brought Adam from Sheol and returned him to Paradise in the company of many'.[52]

In other words, prior to the Resurrection the saints' souls rested in a place that was less than the full eschatological reality they would enjoy once reunited with the body. Ephrem located this 'on the borders of Paradise'.[53] Like Narsai of Nisibis after him, he called it 'Eden'; to it corresponded for sinners, 'Sheol': 'Those whom the Good One loves shall be in Eden, those whom the Just rejects, in Sheol'.[54] It is not necessarily clear to what extent souls prior to the Resurrection were aware of their final eschatological fate or whether they experienced any kind of 'foretaste' of it.[55] But their condition was sensorily diminished, like the 'sleep' which Narsai would later imagine. Indeed, Ephrem affirmed that at the Resurrection the saints shall 'have awoken as if from sleep to discover Paradise and the King's table spread out before them'.[56] This is quite a different paradigm for representing the nature of the saints' existence *post mortem* from the one which we have observed was being popularized by Athanasius of Alexandria and Jerome, Ephrem's contemporaries further west.[57] It was to their portrayals of the immediate ascent of the saints' souls to heaven in the company of the angels that Eustratius pointed, as we have seen, at the end of the sixth century, to defend his thesis of the saints' ongoing patronage of the living from heaven. Ephrem's view, by contrast, of the saints' detention outside the place of full eschatological realization, and their diminished activity in the absence of their body, would have done more to support Eustratius's opponents' arguments than his own.

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[52] Ephrem, *Paradise*, 8.11, Brock, (trans.), 135.

[53] Ortiz de Urbina calls it a 'faubourg du Paradis': (1955) 468.

[54] Ephrem, *Paradise*, 6.19, Brock, (trans.), 115–16.

[55] Their anticipation of this final state is suggested by Aphrahat as well. See *Exp.* 8.19 (SC 349:465): 'Les justes dorment, mais leur sommeil leur est agréable jour et nuit. Toute la nuit, ils ne sentent pas qu'elle est longue, mais elle compte à leurs yeux comme une seule heure, et dès la veille de la matin [i.e., the resurrection], ils s'éveillent joyeux. Les impies, le sommeil s'est abbatu sur eux; ils ressemblent à un homme sur qui s'est abbatue une fièvre extrêmement grave: il se retourne çà et là sur son lit, atteint de frayeurs toute cette nuit qui paraît longue, et il craint le matin où son maître le condamnera'.

[56] Ephrem, *Paradise*, 2.5, Brock (trans.), 86. In his *Hymns on Paradise* Ephrem did not disclose whether Eden and Sheol constituted discrete physical places on the face of the earth. Instead, Ephrem imagined that the current earth itself would be renewed at the resurrection so as to become the eschatological Paradise: Ortiz de Urbina (1955) 469: 'Le paradis adamique est pour Ephrem le Paradis eschatologique, le ciel. [. . .] le lieu de la béatitude des justes sera ce même paradis où Adam a été placé par Dieu'. See also Daniélou (1953) 450.

[57] See Chapter One of this book above, 72–3.

But despite his repeated affirmation of the soul's necessary inactivity without the body and the complementary notion of the souls of the saints as remaining outside the gate of Paradise until the Resurrection, Ephrem occasionally appears to have expressed his expectation of enjoying the intercession of the saints. 'Blessed indeed', he affirmed, 'is that person on whose behalf they have interceded before the Good One, woe to him whom they have opposed before the Just One'.[58] Ephrem was enthusiastic about the saints and wrote at length on the benefits to be gained from a contemplation of their deeds and virtues, which was greater even than the benefit procured from meditation on Paradise itself:

> More fitting to be told than the glorious account of Paradise
> are the exploits of the victorious who adorned themselves with the very likeness of Paradise;
> in them is depicted the beauty of the Garden.
> Let us take leave of the trees and tell of the victors,
> instead of the inheritance let us celebrate the inheritors.[59]

To the saints Ephrem did, in fact, pray: 'May all the children of light make supplication for me there [. . .]'.[60] But how the soul could sound without its 'lyre' (to use one of Ephrem's metaphors) was unclear. The confusion appears to reflect a similar divergence which we shall observe between Narsai's views on the *post-mortem* activity of the saints in *On the Martyrs* and his underlying commitment to the necessary inactivity of the disembodied human soul in his *On the Nature of the Soul.* Ishai of Seleucia-Ctesiphon returned to this problem in the middle of the sixth century and, in many ways, the tension embedded in respect of this subject in Syriac and later East Syrian eschatology was not systematically resolved until Timothy I directed the synod of 790 to consider the matter. Yet in the light both of Ephrem's own writings and later East Syrian orthodoxy, it is perhaps possible to show that Ephrem's appreciation of the soul's inactivity *post mortem* was consistent and applied also to the saints, as his relatively restrained hymns in honour of the ascetic, Julian Saba († 367), 'father of the monks of Syria', can be seen to suggest.[61] It is noteworthy that in the four hymns Griffith presents as authentic, none addressed the saint directly, but in the third-person; Ephrem never referred to Julian as an agent of intercession, but employed the past tense to describe Julian's previous activities on earth, not his current feats performed on behalf of the faithful from heaven.[62]

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[58] Ephrem, *Paradise*, 6.19, Brock (trans.), 115.
[59] Ephrem, *Paradise*, 6.14, Brock (trans.), 113–14.
[60] Ephrem, *Paradise*, 7.25, Brock (trans.), p. 128.

In these hymns, therefore, Ephrem appears to have venerated Julian primarily for his righteous deeds in this life, not as a sainted benefactor who regularly intervened, from beyond the grave, in the world here below, like Cosmas and Damian or any of the saints we saw in the previous chapter. Thus, when he spoke of the saints' intercessions in his *Hymns on Paradise*, Ephrem had in mind, on the one hand, the prayers which the saints offered for others while themselves still in the body. Certainly, this seems to have represented the quality of Ephrem's following eulogy to the saints:

> The city against which they have shaken off the dust from their shoes
> will be in worse plight than Sodom;
> but in the house where they have prayed
> the dead will come to life and peace will reside throughout.[63]

On the other hand, when Ephrem expressed his desire for the intercessions of the saints *post mortem* ('May all the children of light make supplication for me there [. . .]', as above), the imagined scenario was also, crucially, post-Resurrection. That is to say that, in the aftermath of the Resurrection, the saints would be able to make supplication for those who called on them because, reunited with their bodies, they would be permitted to enter Paradise.[64] Once again, to their soul would be returned its 'lyre', the body, and the saints' prayers could 'sound'. In hoping for the saints' prayers, therefore, Ephrem was conflating his own desire for Paradise with the hope of benefiting from the saints' intercession at the Final Judgement, a judgement that of course followed the Resurrection and the re-unification of souls with bodies. The picture that emerges, therefore, is one of the saints' 'delayed' intercession for their supplicants, a patronage on their behalf before the throne of God that was deferred until, and took place only after, the reunion of soul and body at the Resurrection. The faithful would naturally address the saints with their prayers in this life, but only after the Resurrection would the saints, their souls now reawakened through their reunion with the body, present them to God. This view of Ephrem's would be consistent with much later East Syrian hagiography. It was also consistent with at least one strand of interpretation of the benefits conferred on the deceased through the offering of the Eucharist on their behalf, the ritual 'care for the dead' which the East Syrian churches shared with those further west but which equally stood, as we shall see, in need of harmonization with a doctrine of psychological inactivity *post mortem*.

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[61] On these hymns, see Griffith (1994).

[62] Indeed, it was the intercessory powers ascribed to the deceased saint by many of the hymns beyond these authentic four that led the collection's original editor to doubt the hymns' authenticity as a whole, given the difficulty of reconciling such saintly intercession *post mortem* with Ephrem's eschatological writings. See E. Beck, *Des heiligen Ephraem des Syrers Hymnen auf Julianos Saba*, CSCO 323 (Louvain, 1972), xv, cited in Griffith (1994) 201.

[63] Ephrem, *Paradise*, 6.19, Brock (trans.), 115–16.

[64] In Paradise all would dwell in an ascending hierarchy of blessedness, in dwellings corresponding to the merit of their deeds. See Ortiz de Urbina (1955) 468–9; Murray (1975) 258: 'To any modern European reader, Eprhem's doctrine of the

NARSAI OF NISIBIS: *ON THE SOUL, ON THE MARTYRS* AND *ON THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS*

In the second half of the fifth century, a priest at the shrine of St Thecla composed a record of the miracles which that saint performed for pilgrims and supplicants who visited her foundation at Seleucia in Cilicia.[65] The earliest of the Byzantine miracle collections to have come down to us, the *Miracles of Thecla* display the flourishing practice of incubating at the shrines of the Christian saints already before the year 500. As we saw in the previous chapter, however, by the end of the sixth century, if not earlier, it had come to be accepted that incubation, sleeping at a saint's shrine in the hope of receiving a

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different levels must seem an anticipation of Dante's mountain of purgatory'. Daniélou sketches the relationship between the various constituent parts of Ephrem's mountain: (1953) 452–3. Interestingly, Gregory the Great took a similar view in the *Dialogues*. See *Dial.* 4.36.13 (SC 265:124).

[65] See Dagron (1978) and Davis (2001).

miracle or apparition from the saint concerned, implied the ongoing activity after death of the souls of the Christian saints, although that activity was itself fiercely contested (and not least in view of the soul's asserted dependence on the body). Clearly, in other words, by AD 500 an alternative eschatology to Ephrem's 'soul sleep' was circulating in Christian circles within the Roman empire and it is interesting to consider what impact this burgeoning cult of heavenly intercessors and patrons, which would flower so widely (but also controversially) across the East Roman world during the sixth century, might have had upon those in the East Syrian tradition who, now increasingly located in the towns and villages of Sasanian Persia on the other side of the empire's frontier along the Euphrates, followed Ephrem in reflecting on the afterlife and the cult of the saints.

In fact, the fifth and sixth centuries also witnessed the further development and elaboration of the cult of the saints in the Persian church. The various accounts of Christian martyrdom that make up the *Acts of the Persian Martyrs* and a clutch of Syriac-language Lives corroborate this picture of a thriving saints' cult among the East Syrian communities east of the Euphrates.[66] The bulk of these martyr acts claim to describe the apparently widespread and systematic persecution of Christian clergy that was pursued by the Persian king of kings, Shapur II (309–79).[67] The Sasanian dynasty that ruled Persia in late antiquity promoted the dominant position of Zoroastrianism in Persian society, but it was the adoption of Christianity as the official religion of the Roman empire that is traditionally alleged to have led Shapur, in particular, to view his empire's Christians as a potential threat. Bishops and priests, as leaders of the Christian community, were especially singled out for arrest and execution. As a recent commentator has put it, '[t]he psychological effect of these losses on the local Christian communities of the Sasanian empire must have been profound.'[68] There were further incidents of persecution, albeit on a smaller and less systematic scale, under Yazdegird I (399–420), Bahram V (420–38), Yazdegerd II (438–57), and Peroz (459–84).[69] Perhaps assisted by the adoption of a 'Nestorian' (properly speaking, Antiochene) Christological identity that was antagonistic to that which attracted the sanction of the imperial church in the Roman empire, however, the East Syrian Christian community in the Persian empire appears to have experienced, during the remainder of the fifth century, a greater degree of toleration at the hands of the Sasanian authorities.[70] But the memory of persecution remained strong in the Persian church into the sixth century, when further texts purporting to recount the martyrdom of Christians under Shapur II were composed.[71]

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[66] For an introduction to this literature, see Brock (2008) 185–6; Fiey (2004) 3–8. The Acts themselves are published in P. Bedjan, *Acta Martyrum et Sanctorum*, 7 vols. (Leipzig and Paris, 1890–7). A German translation of some of these texts can be found in D. Braun, *Ausgewählte Akten Persischen Märtyrer mit einem Anhang Ostsyrisches Mönchsleben* (Munich, 1915); with excerpts in G. Hoffman, *Auszüge aus syrischen Akten persischer Märtyrer* (Leipzig, 1880).

[67] See Wiessner (1967), with review in Brock (1968); also Labourt (1904) 63–82. There is a summary of the martyrdoms of Simon and Pusai in Williams (1996) 46–50, and translated excerpts from those of a number of women martyrs in Brock and Ashbrook Harvey (1987) 63–100. There was reportedly persecution already under Bahram II (274–91): Brock (1978). But little other textual evidence remains, perhaps because the third-century persecutions 'pre-dated the development of a mature Syriac martyr literature': Walker (2006) 110.

A glimpse of the growing prominence of the saints' cult in the East Syrian church during the fifth century comes from a metrical homily, or *memra*, entitled *On the Martyrs* that was composed by the East Syrian theologian, Narsai the Great († after 503).[72] The homily displays many of the characteristics that were typical of representations of the cult of the saints in the late Roman empire. 'Who could praise these righteous ones sufficiently', Narsai asked, 'if not the gentle Lord for whom they died? See, their deaths are everywhere glorified more than life itself, and their feasts are celebrated in all places.'[73] Although his final interrogative below could suggest that among Syriac speakers, too, there were some who remained unconvinced of the honours the saints were paid, Narsai affirmed:

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[68] Walker (2006) 111.

[69] Walker (2006) 112. See also Asmussen (1982) 942–5; Fiey (1970) 85–99; and Labourt (1904) 104–30. A discussion of the early fifth-century martyrs' acts that resulted can be found in van Rompay (1995).

[70] On the adoption of a 'Nestorian' Christology by the Church of the East during the fifth century, see Labourt (1904) 261–9. But recent research emphasizes doctrinal fluidity into the seventh century: Baum and Winkler (2000) 28–32; and Payne (2009). The waxing and waning of royal authority explains the relative peace of the period rather better: Williams (1996) 44. For the changing place of Christians in Sasanian society, see esp. Brock (1982*b*). The integration of the Christian episcopacy into the apparatus of the Sasanian state may have begun as early as Yazdegerd I: McDonough (2008).

[71] See, for example, the sixth-century *Legend of Mar Qardagh* discussed below.

[72] The translation, again with a brief commentary, can be found in Krüger (1958). The text was possibly written at Edessa towards the beginning of Narsai's career. References throughout the text to pagan persecutors (probably Zoroastrian) could refer to the aggressions of Yazdgird II (439–57).

[73] Narsai of Nisibis, *On the Martyrs* in Krüger (1958) 310: 'Qui pourrait louer suffisamment ces justes, si ce n'est le doux Seigneur, pour lequel ils sont morts? Voici

> See men hurry from all over on their anniversaries, and every day their memory shines over the face of the earth. [. . .] Who is he whose heart does not sing with joy and gladness for the sake of these saints, and who is he who does not honour their memory and their feasts?[74]

Like their counterparts in the Roman empire, moreover, the East Syrian Christians of Persia did not reserve their honours for those who had shed the blood of martyrdom, but magnified equally the exploits of the more recent ascetics as equivalent to the sufferings of the martyrs. Hence, in his homily Narsai praised both:

> Honour to the brave ones who did not weaken in the midst of their trials! They have vanquished the great, the kings and the magnates.
>
> Honour to the ascetics who held fast in the arena facing down the Evil One! They have vanquished all the legions of the powerful.[75]

Unlike perhaps the earlier Ephrem, Narsai in the later fifth century appears to have agreed that the saints could directly be supplicated *post mortem*. Like contemporary Byzantine hagiographers, Narsai in fact seems to have assumed that the saints, apparently in heaven, could hear the prayers of the living despite their souls' disembodied state. Thus, Narsai boldly claimed that:

> Ramparts cannot better protect our cities than the intercession of the martyrs protects the whole world.
>
> There is no king who can protect us as well as the prayers of the martyrs can assist us.

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que leur mort est partout glorifiée plus que la vie, et dans toutes les contrées leurs fêtes sont célébrées'.

[74] Narsai of Nisibis, *On the Martyrs* in Krüger (1958) 310: 'Voici que de toutes parts les homes s'empressent à leur anniversaire, et tous les jours leur mémoire brille sur toute la surface de la terre. [. . .] Quel est l'homme dont le cœur n'est pas dans la joie et l'allégresse à cause de ces saints, et quel est celui qui n'honore pas leurs mémoires et leurs fêtes?'

[75] Narsai of Nisibis, *On the Martyrs* in Krüger (1958) 315: 'Honneur aux braves qui n'ont pas faibli dans leurs épreuves! Ils ont vaincu les grands, les rois et les puissants. Honneur aux ascètes qui se sont tenus dans l'arène face au Malin! Ils ont vaincu toutes les légions des fils des ténèbres.'

> There is no sovereign who can deliver those who flee to him as effectively as the martyrs save us from our tribulations.[76]

He also appears to have expected that the assistance the saints lavished on the living would be manifest in real, human time, not deferred until the reunion of souls and bodies at the Resurrection, as we have suggesed with Ephrem. Indeed, far from their being deprived of bodily functions and turned inwards on themselves in a state of slumber, Narsai's confident description of the benefits that would flow from the saints' posthumous intercessions implied the ability of their souls to observe the course of events of the earthly universe and to intervene actively in it, serving as patrons before God on behalf of the faithful and surpassing mighty kings in their power.[77]

But while there is a strong sense in Narsai's *On the Martyrs* of the ongoing patronage that the saints' disembodied souls carried out in heaven for the sake of the living, the representation of deceased saints as heavenly patrons actively interceding before the celestial king on behalf of the living is not a dominant motif in the East Syrian saints' cult. Indeed, it seems likely that the prevailing East Syrian conception of the soul's dormant condition *post mortem* militated against the proliferation, east of the Euphrates, of the baroque descriptions of the saints' posthumous apparitions and miracles of the kind that began, with the later fifth-century *Miracles of Thecla*, to flourish in Byzantium. Incubation is rarely, if ever, attested in East Syrian hagiography and apparitions of the souls of deceased saints are few.[78]

Narsai also stood among the most important early Syriac Christian writers to have attempted a systematic statement on the nature of the soul and the afterlife from within the Syrian tradition.[79] After a period of teaching in Roman Edessa, Narsai followed when in 489 this school took refuge from the anti-'Nestorian' persecutions launched by Roman authorities in Nisibis, across the (rather porous) border that separated Rome from Persia.[80] The school which he helped to found in Nisibis became, over the course of the sixth century, the most significant centre of learning and biblical exegesis among the dyophysite Christian communities of the Persian empire, providing theological training for a great number of men who later reached positions of leadership in the East Syrian church.[81] In his *memra* or metrical homily, *On the Nature of the Soul*, Narsai addressed the soul's relationship to the body.[82] His conclusions already presented the essential concepts of later East Syrian eschatology and demonstrated the extent to which the distinctive psychological and eschatological doctrines canonized by Timothy I reached back to a much older tradition.[83]

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[76] Narsai of Nisibis, *On the Martyrs* in Krüger (1958) 310: 'Les remparts ne peuvent mieux protéger les villes que l'intercession des martyrs ne protège le monde entier. Il n'y a pas de roi qui puisse nous protéger autant que la prière des martyrs peut nous secourir. Il n'y a pas de souverain qui puisse délivrer celui qui a recours à lui comme les martyrs peuvent sauver des tribulations.'

[77] When he considered the current abode of the souls of the martyrs, moreover, Narsai seems to have imagined that they dwelt in heaven, or at least a heaven-like region, although whether this was before or after the resurrection is clear. 'In this hope of the new life', Narsai affirmed, 'the martyrs suffered all of these crimes, so as, that is, to enter through the gate of light and dwell in the heavenly abode.' See Narsai of Nisibis, *On the Martyrs* in Krüger (1958) 314: 'Dans cet espoir de la vie nouvelle, ils ont subi tous les maux, afin d'entrer et de demeurer au port de la lumière, dans la demeure céleste'.

[78] But see futher below, 279.

For Narsai, human beings existed as an inherent unity of body and soul; only together could they reflect the image of God and fulfil man's particular, divinely appointed purpose. The human soul was totally dependent upon the body as part of the very nature of its existence:

> He who created all things created them as a single being; and the one half of man is not complete without the other.
>
> The soul of man is one half of man as long as the body is alive [. . .]; and its activities can no longer be exercised without the body.
>
> It pleased the Creator to call them, the soul with the body, his image; how, without the body, could the soul accomplish its work?[84]

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[79] On Narsai, see now Becker (2008) 1–11 and 47–72, which includes a translation of a *Life of Narsai* contained in the late sixth- or early seventh-century *Ecclesiastical History* attributed to Barhadbeshabba. See also Vööbus (1965) 57–121.

[80] On the history of Christian learning in Edessa from at least 436/7, see Hunter (2002); and now Becker (2006) 41–76. Emperor Zeno (474–91) closed the school because of its Antiochene ('Nestorian') sympathies.

[81] On the founding of the school at Nisibis, see Becker (2006) 77–97; Vööbus (1965) 33–56.

[82] The discussion here is based on the French translation of the text, with a short commentary, found in Krüger (1959).

[83] For brief treatment of Narsai's eschatology, see Daley (1991) 171–4.

[84] Narsai of Nisibis, *On the Nature of the Soul* in Krüger (1959) 202: 'Celui qui a créé toutes les choses les a créées un seul être; et la moitié de l'homme n'est pas complète sans l'autre moitié. L'âme de l'homme est une moitié de l'homme tant que [le corps] est vivant [. . .]; et ses activités ne peuvent plus s'exercer sans le corps. Il a

Because of its overwhelming dependence on the physical substrate of the body, Narsai thus considered that the soul was necessarily inactive once separated from the body by death.[85] Since the body 'slept' until the Resurrection, the soul was also inevitably asleep, unable to awake and resume its activity until the body, too, had reawakened. Narsai affirmed: 'Does the body sleep? Then the soul also sleeps with it (even as it does not sleep), and until the body rises again, the soul does not rise to resume its activity.'[86] Narsai reasoned that the various limitations which the body's condition (such as its being ill or asleep) imposed upon the soul's activity in the living body were only heightened by death, which removed the body altogether:

> If, while the body sleeps, the soul can do nothing; how can the soul do anything when the body is plunged in death? [. . .]
>
> If, even while the soul was in the body, its course was hindered by the 'sleep' of illnesses, how much more is the soul at rest now that it has left the body's members behind?[87]

Deprived of the body, therefore, the soul was bereft of all its activity. Narsai affirmed: 'Through the body God has given the soul the means to display the power of his wisdom; and God has not permitted the soul, in its state of sleep, to do anything whatsoever.'[88]

Demonstrating what is commonly presented as the Syriac love for poetical imagery, Narsai taught that soul and body existed in a union that was as intimate as that of marriage. The soul was the body's 'beloved'. They were mutually dependent so that, in Narsai's words, 'the soul cannot do anything without the body, just as the body is nothing without the soul.'[89] The death of the body had for the soul the

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plu au Créateur de les appeler, elle avec le corps, son image ; comment pourrait-elle, sans le corps, accomplir son œuvre?'

[85] Thus, Daley (1991) 174.

[86] Narsai of Nisibis, *On the Nature of the Soul* in Krüger (1959) 202: 'Le corps dort-il? elle dort, elle aussi, avec lui, tout en ne dormant pas, et jusqu'à ce qu'il se lève, elle ne se réveille pas pour reprendre son activité'.

[87] Narsai of Nisibis, *On the Nature of the Soul* in Krüger (1959) 202: 'Si, pendant que le corps dort, elle ne peut rien faire ; comment le pourrait-elle, maintenant qu'il est plongé dans la mort? [. . .] Si, quand elle était en lui, son cours était entravé par le sommeil des maladies, combien davantage est-elle au repos, maintenant qu'elle a quitté ses membres?'

[88] Narsai of Nisibis, *On the Nature of the Soul* in Krüger (1959) 202: 'Par le corps il [Dieu] lui [à l'âme] a donné le moyen de montrer la puissance de sa sagesse; et il ne lui a même pas permis, dans son sommeil, de faire quoi que ce soit'.

[89] Narsai of Nisibis, *On the Nature of the Soul* in Krüger (1959) 201: 'elle [l'âme] ne peut rien faire sans lui [le corps]; de même que lui n'est plus rien sans elle'.

same quality as the physical separation of a spouse, plunging it into a period of mourning and listless widowhood lasting until the body's return at the Resurrection:

> Mourning embraces her [the soul] because of her beloved [the body] who has separated himself from her; she is no longer concerned with earthly pleasures.
>
> She wisely keeps silent, because of the passing of her beloved, until she should hear the voice that recalls her mortal body.[90]

This strong view of 'soul sleep' rendered Narsai's view of the posthumous activity of the disembodied human soul far more restrained than that imagined by Gregory the Great or Eustratius of Constantinople at the end of the sixth century. Indeed, Narsai's explicit statement that, following the death of the body, the soul was 'no longer concerned with earthly pleasures', seems specifically to rule out the kind of ongoing intervention in the world of the living which those who, across the early Byzantine world, compiled the catalogues of the miracles which the saints performed at their shrines presupposed.[91] Nevertheless, the appropriateness of applying the term 'soul sleep' to describe Narsai's understanding has been challenged. Indeed, it has been said that 'the notion of the sleep of souls seems with Narsai to have been essentially metaphorical.'[92] But it is not clear what a purely 'metaphorical' notion of soul sleep would entail. On the contrary, a low view of the soul's activity after death in Narsai's thought seems both to reflect the early tradition found already in Ephrem and to herald the medieval East Syrian view we can already associate with Catholicos Timothy.

Nevertheless, Narsai's 'soul sleep' was, to some extent, relative. Naturally, the theologian did not affirm that the soul ceased to exist with the death of the body, as had, apparently, some of those whom Eustratius and Gregory later rebutted when they alleged the likeness between the posthumous fate of human beings and other animals whose souls were perishable. By contrast, Narsai maintained that, although the soul slept and was outwardly inactive, it retained inward consciousness of itself. The immortal nature of the soul could not be destroyed; rather, it remained in suspense pending the revival of its body, like an outcast who had saved all of his household possessions but awaited readmittance to his dwelling to use them. All the same, until the Resurrection, all of the soul's faculties were useless:

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[90] Narsai of Nisibis, *On the Nature of the Soul* in Krüger (1959) 201: 'Le deuil l'étreint, à cause de son bien-aimé qui s'est séparé d'elle ; elle ne se soucie plus des plaisirs terrestres. Elle garde avec sagesse le silence, à cause du trépas de son bien-aimé, jusqu'à ce qu'elle entende la voix qui rappelle son corps mortel.'

[91] But compare the alternative representation in Krausmüller (forthcoming).

[92] See Gignoux (1966) and (1967). The citation here is at (1966) 333: 'la conception du sommeil des âmes, chez Narsaï, semble être essentiellement métaphorique'. See also the comments of Khouri-Sarkis in Krüger (1959) 193–6.

> The soul is at rest, I say, from her work, but not from life; for the soul's nature does not have the ability to abolish the power of life in itself.
>
> Her riches remain, even after she has left her dwelling behind; but she has been rendered unable to direct them as before.[93]

This was a strong statement of the soul's fundamental dependence on the body. Yet it was not that the soul's special faculties (intelligence, perception, the ability to form speech) had vanished; instead, what was lacking was the physical substrate of the body (for instance, the pupils that enabled sight or the tongue that enabled speech) that allowed the soul to exercise its functions. Narsai applied this insight systematically:

> It is not that the energy that is in them has ceased to be living; but there is no bodily envelope to transmit its words.
>
> It is not that the flow of judgement has dried up; but the tree of the body is no longer there and in need of irrigation.
>
> It is not that the judgements of reason are extinguished and its treasures scattered; but there is no longer a guide to come to its assistance.
>
> It is not that the fast pace of the intellect has been interrupted; but the body that serves it as a vehicle is no longer there.
>
> It is not that the lamp of the emotions, these beams of light, is darkened; but the pupils no longer serve to see well.
>
> It is not that the speech, the trumpet of the voice, is truly silenced; but the mouth which proffers the words has been bolted up by death.
>
> It is not because the soul is silent that she has lost her beauty [i.e. her innate faculties]; she is silent because the body, her beloved, is silent.[94]

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[93] Narsai of Nisibis, *On the Nature of the Soul* in Krüger (1959) 202: 'Elle est au repos, dis-je, de son travail, mais non de la vie; car il n'est pas au pouvoir de sa nature d'abolir en soi la puissance de la vie. En demeure sa richesse, alors même qu'elle a quitté sa maison; mais elle est devenue incapable de la diriger, la pauvre, comme auparavant.'

[94] Narsai of Nisibis, *On the Nature of the Soul* in Krüger (1959) 201: 'Ce n'est pas que l'énergie qui est en elles ait cessé d'être vivante; mais nulle enveloppe corporelle n'est là pour transmettre ses paroles. Ce n'est pas que le flux du jugement se soit tari et

In short, the body was the soul's 'instrument' without which its faculties, though subsisting, were inoperative. Certainly, the substance of the soul remained intact with all its faculties unchanged by death. 'In the soul is maintained all that is inherent in her nature, without modification; but nature, speech and strength are silent.'[95] Although all of these faculties subsisted in suspension, awaiting the soul's reunion with the body at the Resurrection, it is difficult not to conclude that Narsai perceived the disembodied human soul, in its *post-mortem* state, as essentially and inescapably dormant. 'Inactive remains the soul after death', Narsai affirmed, 'because she no longer has an appropritate instrument to utilize.'[96]

Moreover, Narsai's doctrine of the soul in many ways recalled Aristotle's distinctive, functionalist psychology as it was interpreted by later Christian commentators during the Middle Ages.[97] This is true despite the fact that the extent of the Aristotelian corpus available at Edessa and Nisibis during and after Narsai's lifetime appears to have been limited.[98] To Aristotle, the soul was the body's form, 'the first actuality [entelechy] of a natural body which potentially has life',[99] endowing all animate matter with the particular characteristics (nutritive, perceptive, and intellective) that made every living substance a particular kind of living thing.[100] In the case of a human

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désseché; mais l'arbre du corps n'est plus là pour avoir besoin d'irrigation. Ce n'est pas que de la raison les jugements se soient éteints, et dissipés ses trésors; mais il n'y a plus de guide qui lui vienne en aide. Ce n'est point que de l'intelligence la marche rapide se soit interrompue; mais le corps qui lui sert de véhicule n'est plus là. Ce n'est pas que des émotions, ces rayons de lumière, les lampes se soient obscurcies; mais les pupilles ne tendent plus à bien voir. Ce n'est pas que le verbe, trompette des voix, se soit vraiment tu; mais la bouche qui profère les paroles a été verrouillée par la mort. Ce n'est pas qu'elle a perdu sa noblesse que l'âme noble s'est tue; elle s'est tue parce que le corps, son bien-aimé s'est tu.'

[95] Narsai of Nisibis, *On the Nature of the Soul* in Krüger (1959) 203: 'En elle se maintient tout ce qui est inherent à sa nature, sans modification ; mais la nature, le verbe et la force vitale sont muets'.

[96] Narsai of Nisibis, *On the Nature of the Soul* in Krüger (1959) 203: 'Inactive reste l'âme après le trépas, parce qu'elle n'a plus un instrument approprié qu'elle puisse utiliser'. Narsai expressed the same view in his *Homily 39*, cited in Gignoux (1966) 332.

[97] See Brentano (1977) 4–17. On Aquinas, Aristotle and 'hylomorphism', see further Walker Bynum (1995*b*) 268–71.

[98] See Becker (2006) 127–30; Brock (1982*a*) 26; and compare Hunter (2002) 235.

[99] Aristotle, *De Anima*, 2.1 (412b) in Lawson-Tancred (trans.), 157.

[100] Aristotle, *De Anima* 2.2 (413b) in Lawson-Tancred (trans.), 160: 'For the moment we may be taken to have made the following claim, that the soul [. . .] is

being, this included the ability to grow and reproduce, the five senses (touch, taste, smell, hearing, and sight), and distinctively the capacity for imagination and abstract thought. Deliberately distinguishing earlier Greek ideas that made the soul a self-sufficient corporeal substance, Aristotle conceived of the soul's function as wholly defined in relation to the body.[101] Indeed, it was impossible to conceive of the soul apart from the body: 'It seems to be the case that with most affections the soul undergoes or produces none of them without the body [. . .]. [. . .] [rather,] it seems that all its affections are of it with the body, as anger, mildness, fear, pity, hope and even joy and loving and hating. For in all these cases the body is affected in some way'.[102] Of course, this paralleled Narsai's strong insistence upon the soul's dependence upon the body for the enjoyment of its various faculties.

One of the greatest inadequacies Aristotle found in the psychological doctrines of his predecessors was their failure to account for the soul's complex relationship with the body. 'Yet this would seem to be required', Aristotle affirmed, 'For it is by their partnership that the body acts and the soul is affected, that the body comes to be moved and the soul produces motion'.[103] As that which determined a given body's faculties, the soul possessed no meaningful function apart from the body. Aristotle explained:

> [. . .] for this reason, they have supposed well who have believed that the soul is neither without body nor a kind of body. For it is not a body but belongs to a body, and for this reason is present in a body and a body of the appropriate kind [. . .]. [. . .] the soul is a kind of actuality and account of that which has the potentiality to be of the appropriate kind'.[104]

This prompted Aristotle towards a view of the relations between body and soul that was at least as unitive as Narsai's. 'Just as pupil and sight *are* the eye', Aristotle affirmed, 'so, [. . .], soul and body are the

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defined by these things, the nutritive, perceptive and intellective faculties and movement'.

[101] On Aristotle's view of the soul, see esp. Hardie (1964); also Barnes (1982) 65–8; and Everson (1995) 178–9. See further the various articles in Barnes, Schofield, and Sorabji (eds.) (1979).

[102] Aristotle, *De Anima*, 1.1 in Lawson-Tancred (trans.), 128.

[103] Aristotle, *De Anima*, 1.4 in Lawson-Tancred (trans.), 142.

[104] Aristotle, *De Anima*, 2.2 in Lawson-Tancred (trans.), 161.

animal'.[105] This did not mean that Aristotle did not consider the soul a substance, although he certainly seems not to have considered it to be a physical substance.[106] But he followed this unitary view of man (and, indeed, all living things, as these, too, including plants, were credited with a soul) to an extreme that was ultimately problematic to later Christian thinkers. For, Aristotle continued: 'It is quite clear then that the soul is not separable from the body [. . .]'.[107] An earlier chapter of this study observed that the sixth-century Christian philosopher John Philoponus resorted, in his lengthy commentary on Aristotle's *De Anima*, to separate 'pneumatic' and 'luminous' bodies ('bodies' that the soul continued to possess after the death of the body) to render the soul capable not only of separability from the body of flesh and blood ('terrestrial' body, according to Philoponus), but also of ongoing possession of the faculties of perception and movement *post mortem* in a manner otherwise difficult to reconcile to Aristotle's strict views themselves.[108] Given his belief in the soul's *post-mortem* slumber, however, Narsai of Nisibis, it seems, would have encountered little difficulty in accommodating the basic principles of Aristotelian psychology, so long as these were seen to apply only to the soul between the death and Resurrection of the body and the immortality of the soul itself was never called into question. Aristotle himself provided in *De Anima* for the possible separability and extra-corporeal existence of at least part of the soul, viz. human 'active' intellect.[109]

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[105] Aristotle, *De Anima*, 2.1 in Lawson-Tancred (trans.), 158.

[106] See Aristotle, *De Anima*, 2.4 in Lawson-Tancred (trans.), 165: 'The soul then is the cause and principle of the living body [. . .]. Now, that it is so as substance is clear, for for all things the reason for their being is their substance [. . .]'.

[107] Aristotle, *De Anima*, 2.1 in Lawson-Tancred (trans.), 158. On the reception of the text in late antiquity, see Moraux (1978); and Dodds (1963) 313–21.

[108] See Chapter Two of this book above, 141–2.

[109] Aristotle, *De Anima*, 3.6 in Lawson-Tancred (trans.), 204–5: 'Now this latter intellect is separate, unaffected and unmixed, being in substance activity. [. . .] It is, further, in its separate state that the intellect is just that which it is, and it is this alone that is immortal and eternal [. . .]'. See further Barnes (1979), who understands Aristotle as tending towards a view of the active intellect as constituting a separable, non-physical substance, while maintaining that Aristotle's conception of the rest of the soul is non-substantialist and inseparable. Cf. Lawson-Tancred who claims a substantialist account of Aristotle's view of the whole soul: Lawson-Tancred, 'Introduction', in idem (trans.), *Aristotle: De Anima*, 51–4, 59–64. He leaves the question of the intellect's separability as an *ambiguum* inherent in the text and, indeed, Aristotle's own thought.

If Aristotle's *De Anima* were available at Edessa or Nisibis, Narsai (and with him later East Syrian theologians) might have found in Aristotle's functionalist psychology strong support for the soul's inherent need to operate through the body, and its necessary inactivity once divested of the body by death. Certainly, intensive study of Aristotle's logical works formed an integral element of the scholastic education provided at the School of Nisibis.[110] But although an Aristotelian inspiration behind at least part of the East Syrian view of the soul has been asserted in the past, recent studies tend to militate against any direct influence of Aristotle upon East Syrian psychology in late antiquity.[111] This is true despite the importance of the so-called 'translation movement' that saw, from the time of the West Syrian Sergius of Reshaina (Theodosiopolis in Greek) († 536), a large corpus of Aristotelian works and commentaries on them translated from Greek into Syriac. Sergius was among the first to undertake the translation of Aristotelian logical texts in use at the Neoplatonic schools of Alexandria, and his works later found their way into the East Syrian milieu.[112] Yet another route by which the East Syrian Christians of the Persian empire came to be exposed to Aristotelian ideas was through the prominent patronage of Greek philosophy that was promoted at the royal court at Ctesiphon-Seleucia, particularly under Khusro I (531–79).[113] Indeed, it has been argued that the 'early Byzantine' revival of Aristotle so permeated the intellectual culture of sixth-century Sasanian Persia that its influence is visible even in contemporary hagiography.[114] In view of this, it is not perhaps surprising that, from the end of the sixth century, suggestive references to notions found in Aristotle's *De Anima* begin to surface in the documents that best illustrate the history of the School of Nisibis and the East Syrian intellectual culture it more broadly fostered.[115] Nevertheless, it is probably best to view these references as a reflection of a number of Aristotelian ideas indirectly mediated through Syriac translations of Neoplatonic commentaries on Aristotle's logical works rather than through any direct access to the *De Anima*, whether in Greek or Syriac. That is to say, despite the evident sympathy between aspects of Aristotle's psychology and Narsai's understanding of the nature of the soul, in his *On the Nature of the Soul*, Narsai seems to have been expanding upon an existing East Syrian tradition whose clearest earlier expression could be found in Ephrem.[116] Direct inspiration from Aristotle was unlikely.

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[110] Walker (2006) 187.

[111] Becker (2006) 127–8. For the older view, see Gavin (1920).

[112] Hugonnard-Roche (2004) 11–20, 123–42.

[113] Walker (2006) 183–7. An important figure in this respect is Paul the Persian. See further Teixidor (2003) 27–31.

[114] See the very stimulating discussion in Walker (2006) 190–7.

[115] Becker (2006) 144–5, 148 and (2008) 110 n. 129.

Narsai's view of the soul's fundamental inactivity *post mortem* was, like Ephrem's, at least ostensibly difficult to reconcile to the cult of the saints or the church's ritual care for the dead—or so at least Eustratius of Constantinople believed by the last quarter of the sixth century, when, as we have seen, he sought to refute the 'philosophers' whose views on the posthumous inactivity of the soul have been compared to Aristotle's. It is significant, therefore, that in his homily *On the Martyrs*, Narsai betrayed no awareness of this tension, where, as we have seen, Narsai described the saints' powerful intercessions on behalf of the living, apparently from their residence in heaven even before the Resurrection. Yet, in *On the Nature of the Soul*, Narsai nevertheless described the posthumous condition of the souls of the saints in starkly different terms. In this *memra*, he specified that the souls of all those 'who have suffered torture' entered 'Eden' rather than heaven upon the death of the body. Here, their souls lay dormant as if asleep, functionally inactive, and rationally and aesthetically unconscious. He affirmed:

> Into Eden enter all the souls that have suffered torments; there they rest as if upon a pleasant couch.
>
> As if asleep, they dispossess themselves of their deeds and make no use of reason in the energy that animates them.
>
> They have totally ceased to concern themselves with either the beautiful or the ugly; and no more do they have to lead the struggle of righteousness.[117]

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[116] Compare Becker (2006) 151–2, where the author writes of 'refitting the Neoplatonic Aristotle over an older Syriac intellectual framework.' On the difficulty of discerning the contours of this framework, see ibid. 9–12.

[117] Narsai of Nisibis, *On the Nature of the Soul* in Krüger (1959) 201: 'Dans l'Éden entrent toutes les âmes qui ont subi des tourments; elles y reposent comme sur une couche agréable. Ainsi que dans un sommeil, elles s'y délassent de leurs actes, et ne se servent pas de la raison dans l'énergie qui les anime. Elles ont cessé complètement de se préoccuper du beau et du laid; et n'ont plus à mener le combat des œuvres de justice.'

As with Ephrem, 'Eden', where the saints' souls lay dormant until the Resurrection, stood in Narsai's thought for a region that was less than the full eschatological reality of heaven, which the saints' disembodied souls could not enter before being 'perfected' through their reunion with the body.[118] Yet this view contrasted remarkably with Narsai's view of the martyrs' intercessions as the steadfast 'ramparts' of the Christian community. If, at death, the saints gave up the struggle for justice, there would, it seems, be little reason to invoke their aid against persecutors or place any confidence in the saints' *post-mortem* benefactions. Indeed, there was little in Narsai's *On the Nature of Soul* to suggest that the posthumous condition of the saints' souls was qualitatively different in any way from that experienced by the majority of the baptized. Certainly, the remainder of Narsai's *On the Nature of the Soul* made no distinction between the souls of the saints in particular and the inactivity that was the inescapable fate of the disembodied human soul in general. Viewed from this perspective, the inactivity of their souls would seem to strike a serious blow against the plausibility of the benefactions which those saints and martyrs, like Thecla in fifth-century Seleucia-in-Cilicia or Cosmas and Damian in sixth-century Constantinople, were widely perceived to continue to lavish on the living from heaven. Indeed, it has been said that '[p]arallel, in some respects, to the Aristotelian view of the dependence of the human mind on the body for knowledge and action, this conception of the "interim" state of the dead [. . .] is not fully consistent with the tradition [. . .] that the martyrs are crowned with glory immediately after death and assist the Church with their prayers. But it would be artificial to attempt to reconcile these two convictions; they are simply further evidence of the many elements – philosophical, biblical, liturgical and folkloric – that together shape ancient eschatology'.[119] If this is so, then Narsai's ambiguity contrasted strongly with Catholicos Timothy's attempt at the end of the eighth century to formulate an eschatologically coherent view of the afterlife of the saints and the value of their intercessions for the East Syrian church.

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[118] Interestingly, the 'Eden' in which Narsai imagined the saints' souls reposing following the body's death was not spiritual at all. Instead, it was a distinct part of the physical world where the soul dwelt until the resurrection: Krüger (1959) 200; Gignoux (1967) 25–31. See further Daniélou (1953) 442–5. In his *Dialogues*, Gregory the Great tackled the question but left his answer open: *Dial.* 4.44.1 (SC 265:156–8): *Hac de re, temere definire non audeo. Nonnulli namque in quadam terrarum parte infernum esse putauerunt, alii uero hunc sub terra esse aestimant*. Despite its strangeness to modern readers, in the sixth century the possibility of localized eschatological realities circulated as part of serious speculation on the nature of the afterlife. See also Anastasius of Sinai, *Qu. and Ans.* 20 = CCG 59:35–7.

[119] Daley (1991) 174.

Narsai appeared to confirm his view of the saints' inactivity before the Resurrection in his homily, *On the Rich Man and Lazarus*. We have already observed that this Gospel parable proved crucial to Eustratius and Gregory's defence of the ongoing activity of the human soul *post mortem*.[120] But whereas their fundamentally literal interpretation of the parable was taken as proving the ongoing activity and immediate *post-mortem* retribution of souls, Narsai, like Anastasius of Sinai at the end of the seventh century, underscored the parable's essentially metaphorical nature. Seeming to betray some awareness of the alternative argument and of his own opposition to the literal words of Scripture, Narsai stressed that the parable was not sufficient grounds for supposing either the saints' entry into heaven or sinners' into hell before the Resurrection. In contrast, he affirmed that '[t]he reward [of righteousness] has not taken place as it is stated [in the text] and neither do the punishments of an unfavourable judgement assail the wicked. It is at the end [of all things] that will occur what is presented symbolically [in the parable] and it is at the last that the reality hidden in this symbol will be realized.'[121] This appears to support the impression obtained from our reading of *On the Nature of the Soul* that (notwithstanding Narsai's apparent comments to the contrary in *On the Martyrs*) the souls of the saints were perceived not to observe the affairs of the living or feel any common cause with them before the Resurrection. Neither do they seem to have been perceived as intervening on behalf of their supplicants in the world here below, for, having been deprived of the body, their souls performed no heavenly intercession before the throne of God. We have already seen that in *On the Nature of the Soul*, Narsai asserted that 'the soul does not have the power to formulate a supplication, nor even a word, without the body.'[122] Narsai seems to have confirmed his understanding of the fundamental discontinuity between the realms of the living and the dead in his *Homily on the Rich Man and Lazarus*. Appearing to curtail the role of the saints as patrons and benefactors of the living from heaven, Narsai wrote that '[t]he dead cannot persuade the living any more than the living can heed a message that comes from the deceased. Solid is the rampart which death has erected before the face of the dead.'[123]

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[120] See Chapter Two above, 118, 126–9.

[121] Narsai of Nisibis, *Homily on the Rich Man and Lazarus* 139–40 in E. Pataq Siman (ed. and trans.), *Narsaï: Cinq homélies sur les paraboles évangéliques* (Paris, 1984), 50: 'La récompense n'a pas eu lieu comme il est raconté et les châtiments de la sentence n'assaillirent pas non plus les mauvais. C'est à la fin que se passera cette chose qui se passe symboliquement et c'est au terme que s'accomplira la puissance qui est cachée dans son symbole'.

Both *On the Nature of the Soul* and *On the Rich Man and Lazarus* manifest that Narsai viewed the afterlife from within a system thoroughly permeated by a commitment to the unitary nature of man as body and soul and, consequently, the fundamental significance of the bodily resurrection. How to integrate Narsai's expectations of the benefits to be derived from the intercession of the saints into that paradigm remains unclear. Indeed, Narsai's works are evidence that, at the turn of the fifth century, a significant tension existed within the East Syrian tradition, one that arose out of the conflict between an 'Ephremic' commitment to the posthumous inactivity of the disembodied human soul before the Resurrection and the pressure of contemporary Christian culture, including the increasing maturation of a cult of deceased saints as heavenly intercessors and benefactors. After Narsai's death *circa* 503, East Syrian writers would return to this problem, most notably, during the sixth century, Ishai of Seleucia-Ctesiphon whose own treatise *On the Martyrs* can be read as attempting to resolve the problems inherent the East Syrian view of the saints inherited from Narsai earlier in the century. But it was a measure of his limited success that Catholicos Timothy returned to essentially the same problem at the synod of Baghdad in 790.

But we may also take another view of the material. The very tension between Narsai's *On the Nature of the Soul* and his *On the Martyrs* was eloquent testimony that a 'low' view of the posthumous activity of the human soul (and implicitly the saints' role as otherwordly benefactors) did not necessarily derive from hostility or scepticism towards the inflated claims of hagiographers, as appears to have been the case with Eustratius's opponents in late sixth-century Constantinople. As Nicholas Constas has observed, '[w]hile it is true that eschatologically reductive beliefs in a "body soul", including the "sleep" or "death" of that soul, generally emerged within rationalist critiques of the cult of the saints, they could also claim to be a legitimate expression of the Christian tradition'.[124] In this respect, the best comparison in Greek literature with Narsai's view of the saints can be found in the more conservative tradition which, whether expressed by Irenaeus of Lyons during the second century or Anastasius of Sinai at the end of the seventh, retained its focus on the Resurrection of the body instead of ceding it, as arguably both Eustratius and Gregory the Great did, to a relatively new interest in the afterlife of the soul, whether in defence of the miracles of the saints or efficacy of the church's 'care of the dead'.

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[122] Narsai of Nisibis, *On the Nature of the Soul* in Krüger (1959) 204: 'Elle [l'âme] n'a pas le pouvoir [. . .] de formuler une supplication, ni une parole sans lui [le corps]'.

[123] Narsai, *Homily on the Rich Man and Lazarus* 199 and 201 in Pataq Siman, *Narsaï*, 55: 'Les morts ne peuvent pas persuader les vivants [. . .] et les vivants n'écoutent pas non plus une nouvelle qui vient des non-vivants. [. . .] Solide est le rempart que la mort construisit face aux visages des morts'. Narsai was referring to the 'great gulf' which, according to the parable, Abraham points out to the Rich Man as separating the living from the dead.

Unlike the two latter early Byzantine writers, Narsai did not consider in his treatise on the soul the question of the benefits obtained for it *post mortem* through the church's liturgical 'care of the dead'.[125] But one factor that appears to have contributed to his broader rejection of ongoing psychological activity after death was the dangers associated with the moral responsibility which the soul's continued activity seemed to imply. If the soul were active *post mortem*, Narsai feared that it would be able either to be posthumously absolved of its misdeeds here below or, perhaps worse, forfeit the eschatological reward for its good deeds by sinning after death. Narsai rejected the notion that the soul could be either saved or damned apart from the body, for both were indispensable partners. He wrote:

> If the soul could be justified on its own, the iniquities of past centuries would already be wiped out. [. . .] If the crimes of those who are dead

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[124] Constas (2001) 121. See also Krausmüller (forthcoming).

[125] For the East Syrian office of the dead, see Anonymi Auctoris, *Expositio officiorum ecclesiae (Georgio arbelensi vulgo adscripta)*, R. H. Connolly (ed.), CSCO 64, Scriptores Syri, series secunda, vols. 91–2 (Paris, 1915), I, 123–5: *Quare defunctis post mortem praecipuum deferimus honorem, precibusque eos honoramus, atque ad sepulchrum deducimus, cum tamen finis eorum sit corrputio?* The text, which is uncertainly ascribed to Giwargis (George), Metropolitan of Arbela and Mosul († 987), is a collection of Questions and Answers on the liturgy. How far this text reflects the practices of Narsai's day is clearly open to question.

> could still be effaced, there would be no judgement, nor any retribution for the men of the past. [. . .]
>
> But the soul does not have the ability either to sin or to be justified apart from the body.[126]

In other words, to have allowed the disembodied soul a measure of independent activity after death would have fundamentally disturbed the Christian's moral responsibility in this life and the meaning of the Last Judgement itself. This argument in Narsai's text arguably contextualizes one of the arguments which Eustratius later rebutted at Constantinople. From *On the State of Souls*, we discover that Eustratius's opponents contested the cult of the saints on the grounds that the ongoing activity of the human soul after death potentially allowed the saints either to go on accumulating good works for an increased reward at the Final Judgement or, *vice versa*, to be exposed to temptation and sin.[127] Naturally, Eustratius dismissed both anxieties as groundless, arguing that the soul's *post-mortem* activity did not incur moral responsibility in the same way as the earth-bound. But the notion of posthumous repentance and absolution was clearly in the air at the end of the sixth century, as both Eustratius and Gregory the Great's apologies for the prayers and offerings made on behalf of the deceased demonstrate.[128] While Narsai's understanding of this practice cannot be gleaned from his foregoing works, given his basic intuition of the interdependence of soul and body, the notion that the prayers of the faithful and the offering of the Eucharist brought about an immediate relief from purgatorial suffering for the souls of the deceased was something Narsai was unlikely to have embraced with much enthusiasm. Like the posthumous activity of the saints, the care of the dead in the East Syrian church seems also to have required careful reconciliation to an 'Ephremic' view of the fundamental inactivity of the disembodied human soul.[129] Certainly, in Narsai's day the practice was no less problematic in the West Syrian tradition.[130]

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[126] Narsai of Nisibis, *On the Nature of the Soul* in Krüger (1959) 204: Si, étant seule, l'âme pouvait se justifier, les iniquités des siècles antérieurs seraient déjà effacés. [. . .] Si les crimes de ceux qui sont morts pouvaient encore être effacés, il n'y aurait pas de jugement, ni de rétribution pour les hommes de jadis. [. . .] Elle [l'âme] n'a pas le pouvoir de pécher, ni celui de se justifier, si ce n'est par lui [le corps].

[127] Eustratius of Constantinople, *Stat. anim.* = CCG 60:785–90: *Τοῦτο γὰρ φασὶν οἵ ἀντιλέγοντες, ὅτι εἰ ἐνεργοῦσιν, καὶ μισθὸν αἴρουσιν. Ἄλλ’ οὐ τοῦτο φαμέν· πῶς γὰρ καὶ ἔνεστι τοὺς ἐν σώμασιν ἀγωνισαμένους, ἐκτὸς δὲ τούτων νῦν ὑπάρχοντας, πόλεμον συνάραι μετὰ τῶν ἀντιπάλων, ἵνα ἣ ἡττηθέντες ἀποβληθῶσιν, ἣ νικήσαντες στεφανωθῶσιν*; See also Dagron (1992) 64, col. 2 and n. 43.

[128] In 597 Gregory corrected a deacon named Theodore from Constantinople who had recently visited Rome and argued that Christ's descent into hell had brought about the posthumous absolution of the souls of those who died before the Incarnation. Less optimistic, Gregory believed that Christ's descent into hell 'only [. . .] those who had believed that he would come and kept his commandments during their lives', that is, the prophets and saints of the Old Testament. See Gregory the Great, *ep.* 7.15 = CCL 140: 465–6; Martyn, *Letters*, II, 467–9.

ISHAI OF SELEUCIA-CTESIPHON, *ON THE MARTYRS*

Towards the end of the sixth century, an anonymous East Syrian writer composed the *Legend of Mar Qardagh*. The *Legend* tells of the conversion and martyrdom of the Persian nobleman, Qardagh, at Arbela in northern Iraq under Shapur II during the fourth century. The text is representative of a certain flowering of hagiographical, and more particularly, martyrological writings that took place in East

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[129] See further below 316–18, and note the anathema on the subject that Bishop Nestorius was forced to pronounce at the synod of Baghdad in 790.

[130] Significantly, Jacob of Sarug (449–521), a West Syrian, whose training at Edessa narrowly preceded Narsai's, portrayed the afterlife in ways that suggest the competing contemporary influence in the West Syrian church of both soul sleep and a form of psychological activity *post mortem* that bears comparison to Eustratius and Gregory's later sixth-century representations. Like Ephrem, Jacob mostly depicted the souls of the deceased as dormant in Sheol before the Resurrection. But Jacob also imagined death as a harrowing journey across a river of fire, in the course of which the soul received assistance from the prayers and offerings of the living. Nevertheless, Jacob maintained that 'the dead are not at all aware of what is taking place on their behalf'. See further Guinan (1974); Daley (1991) 175; also Krüger (1953). A history of the West Syrian response to this problem is beyond the scope of this study, but in the surviving Syriac translation of his (originally Greek) letters, Severus of Antioch (465–538) unambiguously confirmed the soul's ongoing activity beyond the grave and the immediate efficacy of the Eucharist offered for the dead. To Severus, the souls of the dead were 'conscious of services and prayers and especially those that are made over the bloodless sacrifice on behalf of their life; and he affirmed that 'assuredly some consolation results to them in proportion to the measure of each man's character': Severus of Antioch, *Ep*. 117 in *A Collection of Letters of Severus of Antioch (from numerous Syriac manuscripts)*, E. W. Brooks (ed. and trans.), PO 14 (Paris, 1920), II, 284–5. See also Severus's confidence in the mutual *post-mortem* perception of the blessed and the damned: Severus of Antioch, *Letters*, Brooks (ed.), II, 285–6. For Justinian's West Syrian outreaches, see Brock (1980) and (1981); and now Menze (2008).

Syrian Christianity at the end of the sixth century.[131] In the words of Qardagh's hagiographer, such 'histories of the martyrs and saints of our Lord Jesus Christ' were valuable as 'banquets for the holy church'. He continued:

> They are spiritual nourishment for the holy congregations of the Cross. They are an ornament to the lofty beauty of Christianity that is bespattered with the blood of the Son of God. They are a heavenly treasure for the all the baptized generations who enter the holy church through the spiritual birth of baptism. They are a polished mirror in which discerning men see the ineffable beauty of Christ. [. . .] Whoever longs for their reading and constant company is a beloved son of the saints, through whom the saints' divine virtues will be proclaimed.[132]

'Possessions', moreover, 'of righteousness for the children of the church who are invited into the heavenly banquet', the Christian saints in sixth-century Sasanian Persia were commemorated not only in text, but through an increasingly widespread and sophisticated apparatus of pilgrimage.[133] Reflecting this setting, the author concluded his work with a description of the festive atmosphere that surrounded the annual celebration of Qardagh's martyrdom that was held at the shrine that was erected at the site of his passion:

> And each year on the day on which the blessed one was crowned, the peoples gathered at the place of his crowning. And they made a festival and commemoration for three days. But because of the size of the crowds, they also began to buy and sell during the days of the saint's commemoration [. . .] And the commemoration of the holy one lasts three days, and the market six days. [. . .] Later a great and handsome church was also built at great expense in the name of the holy one by believing men of good memory.

Qardagh's benefactions for those who participated in his festival seem to have been widely expected. 'May we be worthy', Qardagh's hagiographer thus affirmed, 'to be aided by his prayers in this world full of wretchedness; and in that new world that will not pass away, may we find mercy by his prayers and delight together with him'.[134] By the end of the sixth century, in other words, many East Syrian Christians appear to have looked, much like Byzantine Christians west of the Euphrates, to their blessed dead for assistance both in this life and in the next, unimpeded, it would seem, by any presentiment of the saints' posthumous inactivity.

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[131] See esp. Payne (2011) 89. For sixth-century martyrs, see Labourt (1904) 177–81; Fiey (1970) 96 and Devos (1994), with a translation of the *Martyrdom of Shirin*. Shirin was later described as a relative of Golinduch, a version of whose Life Eustratius composed at Constantinople. But Golinduch was not commemorated in the Syrian churches, East or West: Fiey (2004) 85.

[132] *Legend of Mar Qardagh* c. 1 in Walker (2006) 19.

[133] Payne (2011) 97–102.

During the second half the sixth century, however, hagiographers were not the only East Syrian writers preoccupied with the cult of the saints. At the Sasanian capital, Seleucia-Ctesiphon, the East Syrian biblical exegete, Ishai, composed a treatise entitled *On the Martyrs* that systematically addressed a range of questions connected to the cult of the saints in the Persian church. Little is known about Ishai's life. But according to the tenth-century *Chronicle of Se'ert*, in 540 Ishai, a student of the School of Nisibis, followed Mar Aba from Nisibis to the capital of the Persian empire after the election of the latter as Catholicos of Seleucia-Ctesiphon, head of the East Syrian church.[135] The same text tells us that Mar Aba then established Ishai as the first 'exegete', or principal, of the school of biblical exegesis which the new catholicos founded on the banks of the Tigris on the model of the Nisibene School.[136] During the course of the century, this 'School of Seleucia' which Ishai first guided would come, partly through the occasional sponsorship of the Persian King of Kings himself, to rival that at Nisibis in the influence its students exerted on the life of the Persian church.[137] But Ishai appears to have secured his theological reputation even before his appointment as head of the new school at Seleucia-Ctesiphon, having been among those chosen to represent the doctrinal views of the Church of the East in discussions with the imperial church that took place, under the auspices of Emperor Justinian, at Constantinople towards the end of his reign.[138] Indeed, Ishai's reputation was such that he competed, in the event unsuccessfully, with one Ezekiel for election to the Catholicate of the East Syrian church in 570.[139] Ishai, the strength of whose theological credentials cannot be doubted, seems, therefore, to have remained as chief exegete of the School of Seleucia until an unknown date between 570 and 582, during which period he was succeeded in this position by two successors, Ramisho and Job.[140]

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[134] *Legend of Mar Qardagh* cc. 68–91 in Walker (2006) 68–9. Walker argues that the Christian festival and shrine took over a pre-existing local cult dedicated to the Mesopotamian goddess, Ishtar: ibid. 249–54.

[135] *Chronicle of Se'ert*, A. Scher (ed. and trans.), PO 7 (Paris, 1911), 157–8. See esp. Becker (2006) 157–9, who points out the problems in the *Chronicle's* account. A yet more problematic source, the so-called 'Mingana fragment', presents a slightly different account: Becker (2008) 161–2, 169–71. Mar Aba was catholicos from 540 to 552. He was born a Zoroastrian and after his conversion travelled widely in the Roman empire, including to Constantinople *c.* 525–33. For his career, see esp. Labourt (1904) 163–91.

[136] There is a summary of what little is known of Ishai's biography in A. Scher, *Traités d'Išaï le docteur er de Hnana d'Adiabene sur les Martyrs, le Vendredi d'Or et les Rogations*, PO 7 (Paris, 1909), 5–7. See also Vööbus (1965) 175, which, however, adds little to the meagre dossier.

[137] Becker (2006) 157. It was responsible for educating a number of seventh-century catholicoi.

At some point during his tenure at the School of Seleucia between its foundation *circa* 540 and his probable death *circa* 570–82, Ishai composed his treatise *On the Martyrs*. This treatise sought, in its own terms, to set out for an audience in the Persian capital, the meaning of the East Syrian feast of the martyrs that was celebrated on the first Friday after Easter. But as Ishai's text dealt only briefly with this feast itself, its real purpose seems to have been to propound the official dogma of the Church of the East on the cult of the saints. Indeed, the origins of Ishai's treatise *On the Martyrs* lay in a request from two high-ranking figures ('Mar Qiris, the priest, and Mar John, mayor of the palace'), either at the School of Seleucia or in the staff of the catholicos himself.[141] These men seem to have asked Ishai to address certain questions in respect of the saints' cult and to answer them 'in conformity with the teaching that has been handed down to this holy assembly by Rabban Mar Abraham, priest and exegete, this treasurer of the Books of the [Holy] Spirit.'[142] Until his death *circa* 569, this Mar Abraham had been the second principal of the School of Nisibis after Narsai and was among its longest serving. His views on any subject attracted a very high degree of authority in contemporary East Syrian sources.[143] To the extent that Ishai has in his treatise presented them faithfully, what is striking, however, is how far Abraham's (and certainly Ishai's) views on the state of the human soul *post mortem* appear to have differed *a priori* from those Narsai propounded at the end of the fifth century, and before him Ephrem.[144] Although he said little about the saints' posthumous intercessions for the living, at least before the Resurrection, Ishai readily referred to the miracles performed at their shrines (although, crucially, not to whether these were performed by the saints themselves). But this is not to say that Ishai intentionally departed from existing eschatological tradition; rather, he seems to have sought to reconcile the somewhat chaste East Syrian notion of 'soul sleep' to the more exuberant realities of the sixth-century saints' cult, a fact which may account for a number of competing tensions in his text.

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[138] *Chronicle of Se'ert*, Scher (ed.), PO 7, 187. See further Guillaumont (1969–70).

[139] Scher (ed.), *Traités*, 6.

[140] Scher (ed.), *Traités*, 6.

[141] Ishai of Seleucia-Ctesiphon, *On the Martyrs*, in Scher (ed.), *Traités*, 16.

[142] Ishai of Seleucia-Ctesiphon, *On the Martyrs*, in Scher (ed.), *Traités*, 16–52 at 17. The Syriac text appears with a French translation, which has been used here.

[143] See Barhadbeshabba's *Life of Abraham of Beth Rabban* in Becker (2008) 73–85. Serving from 510 to 569, Abraham was thus the third head of the School. The precise length of his tenure is, however, difficult to ascertain as two other figures, John of Beth Rabban and Ishoyahb, are occasionally credited with the leadership of the School at

Nevertheless, the text seems to have been recognized early on as being an important composition and it is the only one of Ishai's works to have come down to us. In terms of *genre*, the treatise is an *elta*, that is, 'cause-text' or 'explanation', of which a number of examples survive from the sixth to eighth centuries.[145] The genre was chiefly used to explain, and one feels, often to justify, the feasts of the church and its liturgy, which made it an ideal form for Ishai to address dogmatically the liturgical honours rendered to the saints.[146] Moreover, unlike Ephrem and Narsai's *memre*, or metrical homilies, Ishai's *On the Martyrs*, like other cause texts, was a work of prose.[147]

Certainly, as observed from the vantage point of the Persian capital during the second half of the sixth century, it is possible that Narsai's (and Ephrem's) writings on the posthumous inactivity of the disembodied human soul aroused some anxiety. As the *Legend of Mar Qardagh* and other texts indicate, an organized cult of deceased saints

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points during Abraham's supposed headship: Becker (2008) 8, with chronological table.

[144] Note in this respect Ishai's potentially significant recourse to a humility topos: Ishai of Seleucia-Ctesiphon, *On the Martyrs*, in Scher (ed.), *Traités*, 17: '*Quoique, à cause de ma faiblesse, je sois incapable de rédiger ce traité tel qu'il a été enseigné et transmis par le très érudit Rabban*, toutefois pour n'être pas désobéissant à votre ordre [. . .], j'ai trouvé bon de vous obéir et d'accomplir votre ordre [. . .].' My italics.

[145] Becker (2006) 101–2.

[146] See further Baumstark (1901) 332–3, who refers briefly to Ishai's text.

[147] Becker (2006) 104, who affirms that the shift from *memra* to *elta* 'clearly attest[s] to the prominence that prose was gaining in Syriac literary composition in the sixth century with the influx of western prose texts.'

was clearly well developed in the East Syrian church by this time.[148] The turn of the sixth and seventh centuries, in particular, saw both the production of a number of important East Syrian saints' Lives, as well as the prominent patronage of the cult of St Sergius by the Persian king Khusro II (590–628).[149] To some extent this bears comparison with the increasingly important role which the cult of deceased saints assumed in the public life of the East Roman world throughout the sixth century. Largely as a consequence of war and the recurrent negotiations for peace that ensued, diplomatic and other exchanges between Constantinople and Ctesiphon expanded significantly during the course of the sixth century.[150] But although the veneration of deceased saints came, in Byzantium, to focus more and more at this time on the saints' incubatory shrines, there is little firm evidence that incubation, as an expression of piety and a means of healing, was widely practised, if at all, in the East Syrian world, despite apparently widespread pilgrimage to various saints' shrines.[151] Whatever the status of incubation there, however, some notion of the saints' posthumous ministrations on behalf of the living was clearly not foreign to the cult of saints in Persian Christianity by the second half of the sixth century. On the contrary, a number of stories from the *Legend of Mar Qardagh* suggest that contemporary culture may have presented Ishai and other doctors of the church, cognisant of the East Syrian tradition of soul sleep, with many of the same problems that the saints' activity *post mortem* brought to the fore west of the Euphrates in a somewhat different theological and eschatological context.

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[148] For a discussion of these texts, see Payne (2011) 105–8.

[149] On Khusro II and the cult of St Sergius, see Wiessner (1971); Key Fowden (1999) 133–41; Labourt (1904) 209. It had even been hoped that Khusro's early flight to Byzantium would bring about the king's conversion to Christianity, with whose instruction in which Gregory the Great's friend, Domitian of Melitene, had apparently been charged. See Gregory the Great, *ep*. 3.62; also Flusin, *Saint Anastase*, 99.

[150] The School of Seleucia itself received visitors from west of Euphrates. Notable among them was, between 596 and 602, one 'Maruta', bishop of Chalcedon, and an ambassador on this occasion for Maurice before Khusro II: Becker (2006) 158. The *Chronicle of Se'ert* (Scher *et al*., PO 13, 496–7) records his visit as taking place during the catholicate of Sabrisho (596–604). Maurice (582–602), more perhaps than all of his precedessors, sought to associate the saints' cult with the expression of imperial power: see Cameron (1979*b*); Whitby (1988) 22–3. Maurice was remembered as a saint in the Church of the East: see Brock (1976) 29.

[151] On pilgrimage, see Fiey (1986) 189–91; and Walker (2006) 246–9.

It is thus significant that in his telling of the conversion of Mar Qardagh, the anonymous author of the sixth-century *Legend* included the description of a number of apparitions which the Persian nobleman beheld of the Christian soldier-saint, Sergius.[152] Indeed, shortly before his martyrdom, Qardagh was also the recipient of an apparition of St Stephen the Proto-Martyr.[153] As we have seen, apparitions of the saints' souls played an integral part in the way incubation was practised at this time in the East Roman world in tandem with the proliferation of iconographical representations of the saints that allowed the recipient of an apparition to imagine the saints' bodily appearance. Although there is only very limited evidence for the use of images of the saints in the East Syrian milieu, the author of the passage described Sergius's posthumous appearance in terms that conformed to the saint's iconographical representation as a mounted warrior.[154] These terms suggest that he might have been familiar with contemporary (Byzantine) images of Sergius and that, as in contemporary Byzantium, these images helped to determine the manner in which the bodily appearance of the saints' disembodied souls were imagined and described in accounts of their *post-mortem* apparitions.[155] Without reference to any distinguishing features of Stephen's bodily appearance, by contrast, St Stephen announced his own identity to Qardagh when he appeared to the martyr.

But even if incubation and a cult of the saints' images did not play as significant a part in East Syrian Christianity as it did in contemporary Byzantine piety, Qardagh's hagiographer clearly understood that apparitions of deceased saints could and did take place. More work on the Syriac Acts and Lives of the sixth century and on the archaeology of the Christian saints' cult in Sasanian Persia is required before its context can be conclusively established, but Ishai's *On the Martyrs* may be preliminarily interpreted as an attempt to reconcile the established East Syrian tradition on the soul's dormant condition after death to the cult of deceased saints as patrons of the living, a cult which appears to have flourished in East Syrian Christianity from the fifth into the sixth centuries, and beyond. The broad chronological coincidence, and certain thematic overlap, between Ishai's *On the Martyrs* (*c.* 540–82) and both Eustratius of Constantinople's *On the State of Souls after Death* (*c.* 582–602) and Gregory the Great's *Dialogues on the Miracles of the Italian Fathers* (*c.* 593–4) will also be apparent. As an apology, like these, for the saints' cult, Ishai's text indicates that anxiety about the elaborate honours lavished on the saints was felt as keenly by some Persian Christians as it was west of the Euphrates.

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[152] See *Legend of Mar Qardagh*, cc. 7, 30, 34 and 53 in Walker (2006) 23–4, 37, 42, 58. For the spread of Sergius's cult in the Persian empire, see Key Fowden (1999) 120–9.

[153] *Legend of Mar Qardagh*, c. 62 in Walker (2006) 65.

[154] For the scant archaeological evidence of religious iconography in the Church of the East in this period, see Hauser (2007) 106–15. But note a reference in the, admittedly Greek, *Miracles of Anastasius the Persian* to the supplicant who offered to 'burn a candle' before the martyr at his recently dedicated shrine in Seleucia-Ctesiphon: Flusin, *Saint Anastase*, I, 124. Indeed, the early seventh-century exegete, Gabriel of Qatar, affirmed in a commentary on the East Syrian liturgy that 'it is not at all permitted for the Holy Mysteries to be consecrated without the proximity of the Cross, the Gospel *and the icon of our Lord*': Brock (2003) § 46. I thank Richard Payne for this reference.

[155] See Key Fowden (1999) 35–44, where there is a good description with pictures.

Ishai's text proceeded in an orderly fashion through a sequence of fundamental and more elaborate questions surrounding the Christian cult of the saints. The first question Ishai addressed involved the meaning of the term 'martyr' itself, as well as that of its apparent cognate, 'confessor'. Beginning with this distinction naturally allowed Ishai to define the most important terms used in his treatise. In this section, Ishai demonstrated that, properly speaking, a 'martyr' was one who had borne witness to the Christian faith through the shedding of his or her blood, while a 'confessor' merely designated one who had successfully confessed their faith in public without suffering execution.[156] In spite of this, however, Ishai ultimately collapsed the distinction between the two categories of the saints and asserted that 'in truth each of these words ['martyr' and 'confessor'] can be used both of the martyrs and of the confessors.'[157] Although Ishai did not make explicit any such connection here, by the sixth century in Roman Christianity, both Latin and Greek, the terms 'martyr', and more particularly 'confessor', had come to be applied also to the monks and ascetics who 'confessed' the Christian faith in the Resurrection through the strict disciplinary regimes they imposed on their own bodies.[158] Indeed, in the Syriac tradition, we have already seen Narsai of Nisibis draw the same parallel in his homily *On the Martyrs*. Be that as it may, while it is possible that Ishai's intention here was to justify the inclusion of the memory of both more recent and earlier ascetics in a feast properly dedicated to the martyrs, the impressive corpus of East Syrian martyrological literature from the sixth century suggests that, even in a time of relative peace, the cult of saints in the Persian church remained peculiarly riveted on those of its number who had actually died for the faith—or could be considered to have been willing to do so.[159] Indeed, it may be significant for the historical setting of Ishai's text that Mar Aba who established Ishai in his position as exegete at Seleucia was revered as a 'confessor' because of his detention under Khusro I, but did not actually die a martyr's death.[160] An expression perhaps of loyalty to his patron, Ishai later affirmed that both martyrs and confessors were worthy of an equal reward.

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[156] Ishai of Seleucia-Ctesiphon, *On the Martyrs*, in Scher (ed.), *Traités*, 23–4.

[157] Ishai of Seleucia-Ctesiphon, *On the Martyrs*, in Scher (ed.), *Traités*, 24: 'Toutefois il est de fait que chacun de ces mots se dit et des martyrs et des confesseurs.'

Ishai then addressed the meaning of the cult that was paid to the martyrs, emphasizing that it was, as the Syriac term itself indicated, above all a 'commemoration' of the martyrs' glorious deeds. Like Ephrem in this regard, Ishai appears to have conceived of the role of the saints' cult in the church as primarily moral inasmuch as the remembrance of the saints' deeds provided a model for imitation for the East Syrian faithful in the present. Ishai thus affirmed that:

> The word 'commemoration' signifies 'memory'. And, in fact, the memory of the sufferings of the blessed martyrs strengthens the hope of the truly faithful. It is thus in order to excite us to imitate the virtues of the confessors of the Christian faith, through the recollection of the memory of their victory, and in order to spur us to receive with them the same crown, through the painting of an image of their glories on the

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[158] But see Ishai of Seleucia-Ctesiphon, *On the Martyrs*, in Scher (ed.), *Traités*, 26: 'nous pratiquerons autant que possible la vertu de la pauvreté commes les saints. [. . .] ceux dont l'humilité a été la cause de leur élévation, ceux qui [. . .] par le mépris d'eux-mêmes, ont acquis de la noblesse [. . .].'

[159] Note the question in Gregory the Great's third dialogue which appears to have displayed some anxiety at Rome about rendering an equivalent veneration to latter-day ascetics as to the martyrs of the past: Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 3.26.7 (SC 260:370).

[160] See Labourt (1904) 181–91.

> canvas of our spirits, that the holy fathers have commanded us to celebrate their commemoration.[161]

As Ishai further put it, '[t]o commemorate the martyrs is thus to recall the memory of their glorious deeds.'[162] To a very large extent, therefore, the East Syrian cult of the saints was justified on the grounds of the moral edification of the faithful in the present. In itself this would be an unremarkable explanation of an important aspect of the saints' cult in all times and places. Unlike Eustratius's apology for the saints at Constantinople at the end of the century and Gregory the Great's at Rome, however, Ishai's account of the cult of the saints was ambivalent about the active assistance from beyond the grave which the saints obtained from God on behalf of the living.[163] Although, as we shall see, Ishai acknowledged the miracles and healings that occurred at the saints' shrines (which were important as the divine favour which such miracles proclaimed that the saints enjoyed aided his argument that the honours which the church paid to the saints were not idolatrous), he seemed to deny that the saints were themselves the agents of these miracles. This was in pointed contrast to Ishai's contemporaries, Eustratius of Constantinople and Gregory the Great, not to mention the author of the *Legend of Mar Qardagh*. On the contrary, rather than viewing the saints as a source of ongoing blessings in the present, Ishai appears to have viewed the saints' cult primarily from the perspective of the past or the eschatological future.[164]

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[161] Ishai of Seleucia-Ctesiphon, *On the Martyrs*, in Scher (ed.), *Traités*, 24: 'Le mot commémoraison signifie *souvenir*. Et de fait le souvenir des souffrances des bienheureux martyrs affermit l'espérance des vrais fidèles; et c'est justement pour nous exciter à imiter les vertus des confesseurs de la foi chrétienne en nous faisant rappeler le souvenir de leur victoire et pour nous pousser à recevoir avec eux la même couronne en peignant l'image de leurs gloires sur le tableau de notre esprit, que les saints Pères nous ont commandé de célébrer leur commémoraison.'

[162] Ishai of Seleucia-Ctesiphon, *On the Martyrs*, in Scher (ed.), *Traités*, 24: 'Faire la commémoraison des martyrs, c'est donc rappeler le souvenir de leurs gloires'.

[163] This may be compared to Ephrem's *Hymns to St Saba* above, 253–4.

[164] See Ishai of Seleucia-Ctesiphon, *On the Martyrs*, in Scher (ed.), *Traités*, 25: 'Il est donc évident que ce mot commémoraison signifie souvenir et mémoire des choses passées.' This contrasts with the epilogue of the *Legend of Mar Qardagh*, which looks forward to present and future assistance: 'And may everyone who commemorates him [Qardagh] on that day on which he was stoned be made worthy to have a blissful portion and end together with that blessed one. And may he [the one who commemorates the saint] be helped in this world. And may we find mercy in the new world that will not pass away through his prayers': Walker (2006) 69.

Despite initial appearances to the contrary, in fact, Ishai strongly upheld the completeness of the barrier which, as we have seen in earlier writers like Narsai, was commonly understood in East Syrian tradition to separate the living from the dead. Thus, Ishai asserted that:

> whenever we celebrate the memory of the saints and their feasts, they [the saints] derive no more benefit from the honours we render them than they would be harmed from any neglect to honour them sufficiently on our part. But the veneration which we show them makes us worthy of esteem, is useful to us and will lend us assistance.[165]

Yet the assistance which Ishai supposed to be the fruit of the saints' veneration by the faithful was overwhelmingly conceived of as consisting in moral instruction and a source of ethical inspiration: 'By recalling the memory of their dazzling glory and their great patience in the struggle, we shall burn with the same love of Christ with which they themselves burned, and as if at the sound of the trumpet, we shall gather to celebrate the solemnity of the triumphs.'[166] We have already seen that, for both Eustratius and Gregory, a view of the role of the saints in the church that remained limited to the moral edification to be derived from the recollection of their righteous deeds, would insufficiently account for the sacramental role which their miracles were perceived to have played as an ongoing consequence of the transformation of matter through the Incarnation, one that was comparable in some way to the priest's consecration of the host in the Eucharist. But Ishai's presentation of the saints' cult as a kind of ethical *mimesis* can perhaps be compared to the fundamentally different view of the sacraments and their role in the sanctification of the church that was part of the East Syrian inheritance from the 'Antiochene' tradition conveyed in the writings of Theodore of Mopsuestia, the primary theological authority in the Church of the East, where he was known as 'the Exegete'.[167]

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[165] Ishai of Seleucia-Ctesiphon, *On the Martyrs*, in Scher (ed.), *Traités*, 25: 'toutes les fois que nous célébrerons la mémoire des saints et que nous célébrerons leur fête, ils ne retireront, eux, aucun profit du respect que nous leur rendrons, pas plus que notre manque d'honneur ne leur fera tort, tandis que le respect que nous leur rendrons, nous rendra dignes de considértation, nous sera utile et nous prêtera secours.'

[166] Ishai of Seleucia-Ctesiphon, *On the Martyrs*, in Scher (ed.), *Traités*, 25: 'En nous rappelant le souvenir de leur gloire éclatante et de leur grande patience dans les combats, nous brûlerons de l'amour du Christ, dont ils brûlaient eux-mêmes, et comme au son de la trompette, nous nous réunirons pour célébrer la solennité de leur triomphe.'

In the fourth chapter of his treatise, Ishai reached the liturgical Feast of the Martyrs that was celebrated in the Church of the East on Easter Friday. Ishai naturally pointed out that this feast fell precisely one week after the commemoration of the Lord's Passion on Good Friday, and explained its presence in the calendar of the church at this point as reflecting the fact that, like Jesus, the martyrs had been executed for having preached the true faith of righteousness. Moreover, the truth of the Lord's subsequent resurrection was proved by the willingness of the martyrs to go to their deaths in the hope of their own resurrection. For both of these reasons, Ishai affirmed, '[t]he holy fathers [. . .] established this feast and regulated that it be celebrated immediately after the glorious resurrection of our Redeemer, Christ, so that their [the martyrs'] memory would proclaim their sufferings and make known that they remained attached to their Master even unto death.'[168] Although different accounts of the origins of this feast later circulated in the Church of the East, Ishai directed his audience to a further reason why the feast of the martyrs and confessors should be celebrated so near to that of the Passion and Resurrection of Christ, one that reflected the current abode of the saints.[169] Thus, the holy fathers decreed that the Feast of the Martyrs should occur when it did 'so that', Ishai affirmed, 'the proximity of the commemoration of the saints' sufferings should help us to understand that, just as the solemnity of their commemoration is close to the glorious resurrection of our Saviour, so they themselves are also close to Christ and participate in his benefits: "My desire", it is written, "is to leave this world and be with Christ" (Phil. 1.23)'.[170]

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[167] On Theodore's view of the sacraments, see now McLeod (2002). For the 'general Antiochene ethical focus on freewill and the imitation of Christ in order to restore the prelapsarian man, as opposed to the Alexandrian emphasis on Eucharistic communion', see Becker (2008) 91; and Wallace-Hadrill (1982) 117–50. See Williams (1999) on the relationship between these different views of the Eucharist in the cult of the saints.

[168] Ishai of Seleucia-Ctesiphon, *On the Martyrs*, in Scher (ed.), *Traités*, 28–9: 'Les saints Pères [. . .] ont établi cette fête, ordonnant qu'elle fût célébrée immédiatement après la glorieuse résurrection de notre rédempteur le Christ, afin que leur souvenir proclamât leurs souffrances et (fit connaître) qu'ils sont toujours restés attachés jusqu'à la mort à leur Maître'.

[169] All found in texts later than Ishai's, these explanations often focused on an apparently legendary order of Persian King Shapur II (309–79) in AD 344 for the execution of all the Christians in his empire. When he saw how many thousands confessed the faith, he rescinded his command. See Scher (ed.), *Traités*, 29 n. 2.

We have already seen that this passage from St Paul's Epistle to the Philippians featured prominently in both Eustratius and Gregory's defence of the notion that the souls of the saints were now in the presence of God in heaven, to which realm their souls proceeded immediately *post mortem*. Indeed, the next problem that Ishai addressed in his *On the Martyrs* was the location of the souls of the saints before the resurrection of their bodies, and his recourse to Phil. 1.23 in his chapter on the Feast of the Martyrs suggests that, in the context of the East Syrian tradition of soul sleep, this festival itself created some confusion surrounding the current dwelling place and condition of the souls of the saints. Indeed, by affirming that the disembodied souls of the saints were already 'close to Christ' and 'participants in his benefits', Ishai seems ostensibly to announce a new departure in the East Syrian geography of the afterlife, even if, as we shall see, it was perhaps more a matter of emphasis than substance.

At the climax of his narrative, the anonymous author of the *Legend of Mar Qardagh* reported that, at the moment of the saint's stoning, 'behold, a voice from heaven was heard saying, "You have fought well and bravely conquered, glorious Qardagh. Go joyfully and take up the crown of your victory".'[171] But precisely where, in the time before the Resurrection, were that crown and the place of Qardagh's glorification as a saint? As we have seen, both Ephrem and Narsai understood that, during the period that ran from the separation of body and soul at death until their reunion at the Resurrection, the souls of the saints were detained in a place outside heaven, which both called 'Eden'. As the place where the full eschatological blessedness was realized, heaven (or in Ephrem's terms, 'Paradise') itself remained inaccessible to their souls alone which required, in Ephrem's striking phrase, the 'perfection' that resulted from their reunion with the body.[172]

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[170] Ishai of Seleucia-Ctesiphon, *On the Martyrs*, in Scher (ed.), *Traités*, 29: 'afin que ce voisinage de la commémoration des souffrances des saints nous fît comprendre que, de même que la solennité de leur commémoraison est à proximité de la résurrection glorieuse de notre Sauveur, de même eux aussi sont près du Christ et participent à ses bienfaits: "Mon désir", est-il dit, "est de partir de ce monde pour être avec le Christ."'

[171] *Legend of Mar Qardagh* c. 66 in Walker (2006) 67–8.

[172] See Ephrem, *Paradise*, 8.7, Brock (trans.), 133.

Moreover, separated from the body, their souls, Narsai concluded, were necessarily dormant, 'asleep', 'dispossessed of their deeds' and without the 'use of reason in the energy that animates them'.[173] For his part, however, Ishai seems to have entertained a much stronger view of the saints' ongoing psychological activity after death, and his general opinion regarding the soul's dependence on the body appears to have been much lower. Thus, Ishai affirmed that it was in order to:

> display the greatness of these benefits [of the world to come], [that] God designated Paradise as the dwelling place of the souls of the righteous after their separation from their bodies. Our Lord himself showed up this dwelling place and made it known when he said to the Holy Thief: 'Today, you will be with me in Paradise' (Luke 23.43).[174]

Indeed, for Ishai, 'it seemed good to Our Lord to grant the souls of the righteous a dwelling place in Paradise, as the deposit of future blessedness.'[175] As we have seen, however, this story from the Gospel had provided much less comfort for Ephrem, who, in his anxiety to preserve the soul's dependence on the body, concluded that Jesus' promise to the Holy Thief would only be fulfilled after the Resurrection.[176] In the meantime, the Thief's soul resided in Eden, temporarily bereft of its sensory faculties. Certainly, some of the contrast between Ishai and the earlier writers loses some of its force when Ishai asserts that his 'Paradise' is not, as it had been for Ephrem and Narsai, equivalent to the final place of the saints' eschatological glorification (which Ishai called the 'Eternal Kingdom'), but a temporary, pre-Resurrection abode that invites comparison with the place they called Eden. But the difference in emphasis and tone is striking. Not only did Ishai, like Eustratius and Gregory, imagine the strict separation of the righteous from the wicked immediately *post mortem*, but in his description of the sojourn of the souls of the saints in Paradise, Ishai emphasized their ongoing vitality, rather than their dormant inactivity that Ephrem and Narsai had so stressed. He affirmed:

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[173] See Narsai of Nisibis, *On the Nature of the Soul* in Krüger (1959) 201.

[174] Ishai of Seleucia-Ctesiphon, *On the Martyrs*, in Scher (ed.), *Traités*, 31: 'C'est donc pour montrer la grandeur de ces bienfaits, qu'il [Dieu] désigna le Paradis comme séjour aux âmes des justes après leur séparation de leurs corps. Notre-Seigneur lui-même nous montra ce séjour et nous le fit connaître en disant au larron: 'Aujourd'hui, tu seras avec moi dans le Paradis.'

[175] Ishai of Seleucia-Ctesiphon, *On the Martyrs*, in Scher (ed.), *Traités*, 31: 'il sembla bon à Notre-Seigneur d'accorder aux âmes des justes le séjour en Paradis, comme arrhes du bonheur futur.'

[176] See Ephrem, *Paradise*, 8.2, Brock, (trans.), 131–2.

> This commemoration [of the martyrs] is thus useful to both the angels and to men, who, by learning of the glory of the souls of the saints and the separation of their abode from that of the souls of sinners, are encouraged to practise virtue joyfully in order to win a heavenly abode [. . .]. To this, the martyrs bear witness, who, by means of death, [. . .] prepared for their souls an honourable abode in Paradise. We believed them to be dead, but in fact by their death they have defeated sin and are alive before God, as our Lord himself declared when he said: 'God is not the God of the dead, but of the living [. . .]' (Luke 20.38).[177]

We have seen that those who opposed the cult rendered to the saints in late sixth-century Rome and Constantinople seem to have accused the advocates of the immediate glorfication of the souls of the saints *post mortem* as proposing, effectively, two judgements.[178] Although in the passage above, it will be readily perceived how close Ishai came to setting out a similar view, we shall see below that Ishai did, in fact, remain closer to the tradition of soul sleep than he appears to have at first sight. Indeed, the tension that emerges between Ishai's description of the saints' lively sojourn in Paradise and his later affirmation of their unconsciousness of events here below points to some of the difficulties that Ishai encountered in reconciling a vigorous cult of deceased saints to an inherited tradition of soul sleep.

From here Ishai proceeded to address a problem that appears to have occupied both earlier Syriac authors and our protagonists west of the Euphrates somewhat less.[179] That is to say, why God allowed the martyrs to go to their deaths, but appeared to come to the rescue of the confessors by delivering them from the shedding of their blood. Of course, this led back to Ishai's original distinction between martyrs and confessors, the equality of whose calling he had, however, maintained. Ishai accounted for their different fates by explaining how both belonged to the same divine economy. Certainly, Ishai conceded, the blood of the martyrs could suggest that God 'did not concern himself with the fate of his people, by leaving them completely to the mercy of their persecutors'. But, he affirmed, God did this 'in order to proclaim their patience and to divulge the wickedness of their torturers and the reality of their [the martyrs'] hope.'[180] More straightforwardly perhaps in the case of the confessors, Ishai stated that these were rescued from execution through the assistance of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit that simultaneously emboldened them to proclaim the faith to their persecutors. Here Ishai pointed to God's multiple acts of rescue for the Prophet Daniel from the King of Babylon in the Old Testament, a figure of doubtless considerable interest for the Christian community of Persia, where despite the occasional patronage that both the East and West Syrian churches enjoyed at the hands of the later Sasanian kings, nevertheless occupied a vulnerable place in the society of the 'new' Babylonian empire.[181]

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[177] Ishai of Seleucia-Ctesiphon, *On the Martyrs*, in Scher (ed.), *Traités*, 32: 'Ce souvenir est donc utile aux anges et aux hommes, qui, en apprenant la gloire des âmes des justes et la séparation de leur séjour d'avec celui des âmes des pécheurs, s'encouragent à pratiquer joyeusement la vertu pour gagner le séjour céleste [. . .]: témoin les vrais martyrs, qui, au moyen de la mort, [. . .] préparèrent à leurs âmes un séjour d'honneur dans le Paradis. On les croyait déjà morts; mais eux par leur mort avaient tué le péché et sont en vie auprès de Dieu, ainsi que le déclare Notre-Seigneur, en disant: 'Dieu n'est pas le Dieu des morts, mais il est le Dieu des vivants [. . .].'

[178] See Chapter Two of this book above, 114–15. See also Ishai of Seleucia-Ctesiphon, *On the Martyrs*, in Scher (ed.), *Traités*, 31: 'cela ne veut pas dire toutefois que ce soit là [in Paradise] seulement la récompense de leurs œuvres et leurs tourments, mais que Dieu, en séparant le séjour des âmes illustres (de celui des âmes damnées), a voulu nous faire connaître la terrible séparation, qui aura lieu lors du jugement divin, entre les justes et les pécheurs et à la suite de laquelle les premiers iront au Royaume éternel et les derniers seront jetés dans les ténèbres de dehors [. . .].'

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[179] Again, however, Ishai's text bears comparison with a question in Gregory the Great's *Dialogues*: see *Dial.* 3.37.21 (SC 260:426) on the martyrdom of a Christian priest by the Lombards. Moreover, as an attempt to address what is, in the end, an aspect of the theodicy problem, Ishai's account here can be compared to that of Anastasius of Sinai, cited in the introduction to this book above, 3. Of course, it was a staple subject of debate in the Christian, and Jewish traditions.

[180] Ishai of Seleucia-Ctesiphon, *On the Martyrs*, in Scher (ed.), *Traités*, 34–5: 'Quelquefois il ne semble pas se préoccuper des siens, en les laissant complètement à la merci de leurs persécuteurs; mais (il fait cela) dans le but de proclamer leur patience et de divulguer la malice de leurs bourreaux et la réalité de leur espérance.'

[181] Note Ishai's affirmation further on his treatise that the days of widespread persecution in Persia were over: Ishai of Seleucia-Ctesiphon, *On the Martyrs*, in Scher (ed.), *Traités*, 45: 'Quoique de nos jours la persécution des païens ne sévisse pas contre nous [. . .].' For the prominence of Daniel in the hagiographical literature of the Persian church, see van Rompay (1995) 373–5. On the general prosperity of the church under later Sasanian kings, Khusro I, Hormizd IV and Khusro II, see Walker (2006) 87–9, who nevertheless emphasizes that a harmonious relationship with the secular authorities was not universally appreciated. On Hormizd, see Labourt (1904) 200–1, who quotes the famous words of the king as reported in al-Tabari, a later Muslim source: 'De même que notre trône royal ne peut se tenir sur ses deux pieds de devant, s'il ne s'appuie également sur les deux de derrière, ainsi notre gouvernement

Indeed, Ishai asserted that God's occasional deliverance of those who faithfully confessed his name was necessary, for, 'if God had not acted in this way from time to time, we would have thought that he abandons those who fear him, the lively faith of the martyrs and their patience [amid persecution] would not have been proclaimed [. . .] and finally the greatness of the divine assistance itself would not have been manifested.'[182] Even in the case of the martyrs, Ishai could assert that it was only through the assistance that God offered them that they were able to withstand for as long as they did the tortures to which their persecutors subjected them. But a striking feature of the final section of this chapter of *On the Martyrs* was Ishai's eagerness to present the shedding of the martyrs' blood as an offering wholly acceptable to God. 'The holy martyrs', he affirmed:

> because they sought, in good will, to please their Lord and to oppose their patience to the tortures to which they were subjected, received God's assistance according to their good will. 'Provided we are of good will', it is written, 'we are pleasing to God according to what we have' (2 Cor 8.12). But the martyrs were of good will and the sacrifice that they made of themselves was pleasing to him. They held fast in the midst of their torments and their faith made them alive.[183]

What is crucial in this section, therefore, is that with this insistence on the martyrs' self-offering as a sacrifice pleasing to God, Ishai was perhaps already preparing for the subject that would occupy the next chapter of his treatise, one dedicated to proving that '[w]hen we

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ne peut être stable et assuré si nous faisons révolter contre nous les chrétiens et les sectateurs des religions étrangères à notre foi.'

[182] Ishai of Seleucia-Ctesiphon, *On the Martyrs*, in Scher (ed.), *Traités*, 36: 'Et de fait si Dieu n'avait pas agi ainsi de temps en temps, on aurait pensé qu'il abandonne ceux qui le craignent; la foi vive des martyrs et leur patience ne seraient pas proclamées; la mauvaise volonté des impies ne serait pas non plus connue; enfin le grand secours divin, lui aussi, ne serait point manifesté.'

[183] Ishai of Seleucia-Ctesiphon, *On the Martyrs*, in Scher (ed.), *Traités*, 37: 'Les saints martyrs, parce qu'ils mirent de bonne volonté à plaire à leur Seigneur et à opposer la patience (aux tortures), ont été secourus selon leur bonne volonté: "Pourvu qu'on soit", est-il dit, "de bonne volonté, on est agréable (à Dieu) selon ce qu'on a." Les martyrs ont été de bonne volonté et le sacrifice qu'ils firent d'eux-mêmes lui a été agréable; ils se tinrent au milieu des tourments et leur foi les a vivifiés.'

venerate the bones of the martyrs, we do not worship them with an idolatrous cult.'[184]

With this chapter in defence of the veneration of the martyrs' relics, we arguably reach the climax of Ishai's *On the Martyrs*. Ishai's gaze has broadened considerably from the narrower question of why the East Syrian church celebrated a Feast of the Martyrs on Easter Friday, the topic which was presented, as we have seen, as the formal subject of the text as *elta*. On the contrary, the subject of this chapter embraced the East Syrian cult of the saints as a whole as Ishai sought both to justify its foundations by addressing the apparent anxiety of many that the cult was, in fact, idolatrous, and to clarify precisely what sort of honour it was that the Church of the East offered its saints. Perhaps the very exuberance of many martyr festivals at this time, including the fine buildings and six-day markets of the kind observed at the shrine of Qardagh, increased the unease felt by some.[185] Certainly, the increasingly well-organized rhythm of patronal festivals and the network of pilgrimage shrines that grew up among the Christian communities of Sasanian Persia during the sixth century highlighted at the very least the need for clarity on the nature of the saints' activity or otherwise between death and the Resurrection.[186]

Ishai began his exposition of the legitimacy of the honours paid to the saints with a passage from the Gospel: 'He who honours you', Jesus said to his disciples, 'honours me; and he who honours me, honours the one who sent me' (Matt 10.40).[187] But as Ishai saw it, the text was of as much relevance in sixth-century Persia as it had been in first-century Palestine, for among those disciples whose honour Jesus foresaw were not only the apostles, but also the latter-day martyrs and confessors whose memory the Church of the East then venerated. 'In this way', Ishai said in reference to the text above, '[Christ] desired to teach all peoples that the honour rendered to his disciples is not an ordinary honour, as by this means we yet honour the Lord himself. This veneration is thus well pleasing to God [. . .]'.[188] As we have just seen, at the end of the previous chapter of his treatise, Ishai portrayed the martyrs as the favoured recipients of divine assistance, with whose self-oblation God himself was well pleased. Apparently, therefore, in order to allay some of the anxieties of his audience that the veneration of the bones of the martyrs might have been offensive in God's eyes, Ishai reiterated the martyrs' steadfast faith in God's promises that took them to their deaths, asserting also that their example offered an ongoing model of obedience that would encourage the faithful even today. But, in Ishai's view, the miracles that the relics of the martyrs performed at their shrines were an even more compelling demonstration of the propriety of the church's practice of venerating the saints.[189] In a manner that recalls both Eustratius and Gregory's slightly later apologies, Ishai affirmed:

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[184] Heading to chapter VII in Ishai of Seleucia-Ctesiphon, *On the Martyrs*, in Scher (ed.), *Traités*, 38: 'Quand nous vénérons les os des martyrs, ce n'est pas d'un culte de latrie que nous les adorons.'

[185] See further Walker (2006) 281–2, who emphasizes the merriment saints' festivals could occasion.

[186] For the tension between lay and ecclesiastical magnates that the development of saints' shrines engendered among Persian Christians, see Payne (2011) 102–5.

[187] Cited in Ishai of Seleucia-Ctesiphon, *On the Martyrs*, in Scher (ed.), *Traités*, 38: 'Celui qui vous honore, m'honore; et celui qui m'honore, honore celui qui m'a envoyé.' Half a century after Ishai, Leontius of Neapolis would make the same argument in favour of the saints' cult against the criticisms of its idolatrousness made by Byzantine Jews: Leontius of Neapolis, *Against the Jews* in Déroche (1994) 78.

> In this way, even after their death, through the radiant miracles that take place through their bodily relics, God declares that all [of the martyrs] are alive in him. Thus, just as Elisha, after his own death, gave life to a dead man (2 Kgs 13–20), in the same way the bones of the other saints have frequently performed splendid miracles.[190]

Such miracles were the reason why 'the bones of the martyrs are everywhere an object of veneration. The honour paid to their bones attests that there is nothing greater than the love of God for whom the saints suffered [. . .].' Moreover, it was out of the love of God that 'all peoples desire and love to honour their bones, even as they see them dispersed abroad.'[191] But evidently there was some anxiety about this in the circles Ishai addressed in sixth-century Seleucia. He thus warned his audience that '[w]e should not be churlish by refusing to honour those whom God himself continues to honour after their death through the wonders that he has flow from their bodies.'[192]

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[188] Ishai of Seleucia-Ctesiphon, *On the Martyrs*, in Scher (ed.), *Traités*, 38–9: 'Il voulut par là enseigner à tous les hommes que l'honneur rendu aux disciples n'est pas un honneur ordinaire, puisque par là nous honorons encore Notre-Seigneur lui-même. Ce respect est donc très agréable à Dieu [. . .].'

[189] A longer version of the *Legend of Mar Qardagh* preserved in one manuscript recorded that, at the moment of the saint's passion, a voice from heaven proclaimed: 'Behold I will make your bones a font of assistance for those in illness and in pain, and for the cultivated fields, lest there should fall upon them the locust and the cankerworm, the field mouse and the maggot.' See Walker (2006) 68 n. 218.

[190] Ishai of Seleucia-Ctesiphon, *On the Martyrs*, in Scher (ed.), *Traités*, 40: 'Aussi, même après leur mort, par les miracles éclatants qui s'opèrent par leurs ossements, Dieu déclare-t-il que tous sont vivants en lui; ainsi Élisée, après son décès, donna vie à un mort; de même les ossements des autres saints opérèrent bien des fois des miracles éclatants.' For the part played by Elijah and Elisha in Eustratius and Gregory's apologies, see Chapter One of this book, 40. Eustratius cited this same passage as Ishai at CCG 60:369–74.

As we have seen earlier in the treatise, Ishai presented the martyrs' willing self-sacrifice as evidence of the reality of the life beyond the grave which Christ himself preached, not least through his own Resurrection. We have also observed that, from the perspective of an existing tradition of soul sleep as expressed in the writings of Ephrem and Narsai, Ishai laid remarkable stress on the ongoing activity, before the Resurrection, of the disembodied souls of the saints in Paradise. With his demonstration above of the abundant miracles which the relics of the saints performed at their shrines, Ishai would seem here to confirm his view that, *pace* the fathers of the early Syriac tradition, the souls of the saints did in fact retain a significant degree of activity beyond the grave. Yet even as he defended the veneration which the church paid to the wonder-working bones of the martyrs, Ishai denied that their cult was idolatrous. In the process, he substantially reduced the scope of the saints' posthumous activity and their engagement with the world here below. 'So, we honour the bones of the martyrs', he explained:

> but heaven forbid that we mean by that the adoration that belongs only to God. It would be sacreligious to worship in an idolatrous way [lit. adore with a cult of *latreia*] the relics of these illustrious men. For, these bones of the blessed are not themselves aware of the miracles that flow from them.[193]

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[191] Ishai of Seleucia-Ctesiphon, *On the Martyrs*, in Scher (ed.), *Traités*, 40–1: 'C'est donc pour cela que les os des martyrs sont partout un objet de vénération. L'honneur rendu à leurs ossements témoigne qu'il n'y a rien de plus grand que l'amour de Dieu, pour lequel les saints supportèrent toutes sortes de tortures et de tourments que les persécuteurs leur firent subit, et pour lequel tous les peuples désirent et aiment à honorer leurs ossements, tout en les voyant dispersés çà et là.'

[192] Ishai of Seleucia-Ctesiphon, *On the Martyrs*, in Scher (ed.), *Traités*, 41: 'Nous ne devons pas être injustes en ne respectant pas ceux que Dieu lui-même honore après leur mort par les grandes choses qu'il en fait découler.'

[193] Ishai of Seleucia-Ctesiphon, *On the Martyrs*, in Scher (ed.), *Traités*, 41: 'Nous honorons donc les ossements des martyrs. Mais à Dieu ne plaise que nous entendions par là l'adoration, qui appartient qu'à Dieu. Ce serait un sacrilège d'adorer d'un culte

Ishai's distinction between the legitimate veneration, or honours, that the church paid to the saints and the worship, or *latreia*, that was reserved for God alone, foreshadowed the distinction that the defenders of images would make in eighth-century Byzantium.[194] But in marked contrast to the Greek and Latin writers of the same period as Ishai, the East Syrian doctor appeared to deny that the disembodied souls of the saints, despite their triumphant entry into Paradise, retained any knowledge of the world here below or were directly involved in its affairs.[195] How their relics performed miracles, if not through the sentient oversight of the saints' souls from heaven, Ishai did not specify.[196] It may be that he imagined that it was God himself who performed the miracles that took place through the saints' relics, or through the in-dwelling Holy Spirit that remained with them.[197]

What is clear is that with this doctrine of the saints' posthumous 'unconsciousness' (at least of worldly events) Ishai steered the East Syrian cult of the saints down a path that led it far from the somewhat unsettling representations of the saints' activity *post mortem* and their vigorous, and as we have seen contested, intervention in the world of the living, whether at Constantinople, Thessalonica, Alexandria, or

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de latrie les ossements de ces hommes illustres; car ces os des bienheureux ne sentent pas les miracles qui en découlent.'

[194] See Déroche (1994) 94–5. On the apparently aniconic nature of East Syrian Christianity in the Sasanian period, see Hauser (2007) 114–15. Ishai twice refers to 'images': Ishai of Seleucia-Ctesiphon, *On the Martyrs*, in Scher (ed.), *Traités*, 24, 41. For the first, see above p. 281. The second reference was to the 'statues and images' commonly set up to honour those who died in battle on behalf of the Persian king of kings, to which he compared the shrines which Persian Christians erected in honour of the saints. See also Barhadbeshabba, *Life of Narsai* in Becker (2008) 47–9, which speaks perhaps more conventionally of the written Lives of the saints as an 'image'. On similar metaphors in Greek and Latin authors, see further Cameron (1991*a*) 226–8; and esp. Frank (2000), 171–81.

[195] See esp. Chapter Two of this book above, 126–9. But note also Gregory the Great's affirmation in his *Moralia* above 21–2.

[196] On tomb and relic miracles in Persian martyrs' acts, see Bruns (2006) 202–9. Compare also the tomb miracles performed by the relics of St Febronia in Brock and Ashbrook Harvey (1987) 175–6, where the author presented the deceased martyr as actively resisting the attempt to translate her body to an alternative shrine. Despite being set in the early fourth century, the text may have been composed during the sixth, when Febronia's cult became popular. Febronia was commemorated in the East Syrian church, but the earliest manuscripts are West Syrian in provenance.

[197] See, for example, the West Syrian Philoxenus of Mabbug, *On the Indwelling of the Holy Spirit*, ed. Tanghe, *Le Museon* 73 (1960), 53. I thank an anonymous reader for this reference.

Rome.[198] It also explains why nowhere in his *On the Martyrs*, before his final exhortation of the end of the *elta*, did Ishai advert to the direct supplication of the saints as advocates of the living before God, or, significantly, refer to the importance of their intercessions, as contemporary Byzantine writers did so zealously.[199]

By thus limiting the saints' awareness of the miracles which their bodies (or God through their bodies) performed, Ishai doubtless sought to maintain the strength of that barrier between the living and the dead which, in his eyes at least, seems to have played a significant part in protecting the saints' cult from the danger of transmogrifying into an odious form of idolatry. Despite appearing earlier on in his treatise to depart some distance from Ephrem and Narsai in the degree of activity he was willing to ascribe to the saints' disembodied souls before the Resurrection (at no point, for instance, did he describe them as 'asleep'), Ishai remained within the traditional current of East Syrian teaching on the afterlife by emphasizing the effective inactivity of the souls of the saints after death, at least in the world here below. This is true even if he was not willing to impose complete inactivity upon the saints' souls in Paradise. Rather than perceiving the souls of the saints as powerful agents in the historical present from their vital abode in heaven, Ishai, like other East Syrian writers, appears to have preferred to view the saints safely from the perspective of the historical past. Thus, when he came in a final flourish to justify once more before his audience the propriety of the veneration paid to the martyrs, Ishai again resorted to the ethical function of the recollection of their past deeds for the imitation by the living. With the considerably reduced ambit for independent activity which the East Syrian understanding of the afterlife left for the souls of the saints relative to contemporary Greek and Latin representations of their miracles, the cult of the saints in Persian Christianity appears largely to have lacked, or consciously avoided, the direct supplication of deceased saints in the manner we have seen in the East Roman world, west of the Euphrates. Such supplication of the saints did not even appear in Ishai's parting description, in this chapter, of the contours of the East Syrian saints' cult as seen from the school room at Seleucia:

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[198] Cf. Constas (2001) 94: '[t]he continuity of the [a saint's] earthly and eschatological body was matched by the continuity of memory and consciousness, producing a powerful living presence that was made available to the Byzantine faithful from within the transcendent time and sacred space of the liturgy.'

[199] In this sense, the previously observed 'anomaly' between Narsai's even stronger insistence on the soul's pre-resurrection inactivity (as in *On the Nature of the Soul* and *On the Rich Man and Lazarus*) and his optimistic expectation of assistance through the *post-mortem* intercession of the saints (as in his *On the Martyrs*) remained unresolved.

> Not only do we render unto the saints the veneration that is due to them by recounting the story [of their deeds], but we furthermore erect shrines and build churches in their honour, where we offer our love in tribute by occasionally gathering at the altar for their commemoration. In this way, we show that we belong to the same family as them [the martyrs] and we also exhort many persons to persevere genuinely in imitating these victorious saints [. . .]. The honour which we pay to the holy confessors is thus just and reasonable.[200]

At the end of the eighth century, Catholicos Timothy would invest a vision of the saints' cult very similar to that which Ishai articulated in his *On the Martyrs* with the canonical authority of an ecclesiastical synod and the support of his own letters.

Like, therefore, the oft-represented East Syrian understanding of the Eucharist, the vision of the saints' cult articulated in Ishai's *On the Martyrs* was essentially ethical and mimetic, rather than participatory and 'transformative'.[201] Thus, Ishai devoted the final chapter of his treatise to shoring up the value of this ethical view of the saints, based fundamentally on the imitation by the faithful of the glorious deeds of the martyrs in the past, in a period where martyrdom was clearly not a frequent reality for most members of the Persian church.[202] This was made easier by the equality Ishai had already drawn between the martyrs, who had died for Christ's sake, and the confessors who, for whatever reason, had not. For, Ishai believed, 'each will obtain his reward, not according to his works (whatever that may be), but [. . .] according to the uprightness of the goal towards which his faith leads him, and according to the conscientiousness of his work.'[203] He further affirmed:

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[200] Ishai of Seleucia-Ctesiphon, *On the Martyrs*, in Scher (ed.), *Traités*, 42: 'Non seulement nous leur rendons le respect qui leur est dû, en racontant leur histoire, mais nous érigeons encore et nous bâtissons en leur honneur des temples, où nous offrons en tribut notre amour en nous réunissant quelquefois à la table de leur commémoraison. Ainsi, par ces choses nous montrons que nous appartenons à la même famille qu'eux et nous exhortons bien des personnes à s'encourager réellement à imiter ces saints victorieux [. . .]. L'honneur que nous rendons aux saints confesseurs est donc juste et raisonnable.'

[201] See the seminal article by Chadwick (1951); and esp. Williams (1999) 72: 'Theodore of Mopsuestia in his liturgical commentaries gives the first signs of the Eucharist being interpreted as a king of "passion play", its details corresponding to the earthly life of the Lord. [. . .] the sacramental body of Christ is not in any way an intrinsically holy object – a "tenseless" bit of glorified matter, embodying and transmitting divine power; it is the presence of a narratively defined humanity, a history achieved'. Characteristically, Antiochene Christological tradition carefully affirmed both the total, divine transcendence of the Word incarnate in Christ and, simultaneously, the complete humanity and moral autonomy of the man Jesus: Norris (1982) 155–6. See now also McLeod (2002); and Krausmüller (2005).

> Despite the fact that today the persecution of the pagans no longer bears down upon us, if we apply ourselves to virtue, if we crucify ourselves to the world and to all the passions of the flesh as tokens of our faith, by suffering affronts with humility and by engaging ourselves the pursuit of righteousness, we shall participate, like the holy martyrs, in the prerogatives of the knowing Judge, which judges all, and we shall enjoy the benefits of Christ with the martyrs and confessors.[204]

The Christian's reward in the next life would be calculated not according to whether he or she had actually shed blood for the sake of Christ, but according to the purity of his or her intentions and the diligence with which he or she had practised Christ's teaching. The value of commemorating the martyrs' example, and the propriety of the honours rendered unto them by the church, were thus manifest to all. Besides, persecution could return at any time. As Ishai reminded his audience, '[i]f we have, in imitation of the martyrs, a struggle to lead and there to make an apology for the truth of our faith, let us be full of confidence [. . .]'.[205]

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[202] But conversion from Zoroastrianism could always be dangerous: Walker (2006) 112. For those martyred under Khusro II, see Labourt (1904) 234–5; Flusin, *Anastase le Perse*, II, 118–27.

[203] Ishai of Seleucia-Ctesiphon, *On the Martyrs*, in Scher (ed.), *Traités*, 45: 'chacun obtiendra sa récompense, non selon son ouvrage quel qu'il soit, mais [. . .] selon la droiture de son but, vers lequel le conduit sa foi, et selon son assiduité au travail.'

[204] Ishai of Seleucia-Ctesiphon, *On the Martyrs*, in Scher (ed.), *Traités*, 45–6: 'Quoique de nos jours la persécution des païens ne sévisse pas contre nous, toutefois, si nous nous appliquons à la vertu, si nous nous crucifions au monde et aux passions charnelles, donnant preuves de notre foi, en souffrant les affronts avec humilité et en nous engageant dans la carrière de la justice, nous particperons, comme les saints martyrs, aux prérogatives de la Justice intelligente, qui juge tout le monde, et nous jouirons des bienfaits du Christ avec les martyrs et les confesseurs.'

[205] Ishai of Seleucia-Ctesiphon, *On the Martyrs*, in Scher (ed.), *Traités*, 47: 'Si nous avons, à l'instar des martyrs, un combat à soutenir et à y faire l'apologie de la vérité de

With this, Ishai reached the end of his treatise on the cult of the martyrs. Summarizing its contents in a final, concluding chapter, the East Syrian doctor reiterated that, with this *elta*, he had demonstrated why it was that the church commemorated the memory of the martyrs and their confessors at its chosen point in the liturgical calendar, and the value which the recollection of their struggles held as an example for those who followed after them in the faith today. 'Not only', he said, 'must we be careful to listen attentively to the stories of their sufferings and come to know their glories, but even more we must carefully imitate them in their steadfastness'.[206] He had also shown that the saints' souls resided in Paradise, as a reward for their righteous combat here below, until the Resurrection of the body on the final day. But he had, moreover, also:

> made known that we must honour the memory of those who delivered themselves up to every kind of tourment for the love of Christ and in order to proclaim the truth of our religion, and all the more since God himself honours the relics of the saints by making wondrous miracles flow from them in abundance.[207]

He further affirmed that 'by honouring them, we do not worship them with an idolatrous cult, but that by loving them and applying ourselves to remember them, we proclaim that we have the same faith as they, and we render homage to their Lord, for the sake of whose name they were crowned.'[208] But even if this would seem to suggest a degree of unease in Ishai's circle at Seleucia regarding the legitimacy of the honours that the East Syrian church paid to the saints, there

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notre foi, soyons pleins de confiance dans la parole de notre Rédempteur (Matt 10.18–19).'

[206] Ishai of Seleucia-Ctesiphon, *On the Martyrs*, in Scher (ed.), *Traités*, 49: 'Non seulement nous devons être attentifs à ecouter l'histoire de leurs souffrances et à connaître leurs gloires, mais il faut encore que nous les imitions avec soin dans leur fermeté [. . .].'

[207] Ishai of Seleucia-Ctesiphon, *On the Martyrs*, in Scher (ed.), *Traités*, 49: 'Nous avons encore fait connaître que nous devons honorer la mémoire de ceux qui se sont livrés à toutes sortes de tourments pour l'amour du Christ et pour proclamer la vérité de notre religion, d'autant plus que Dieu lui-même honore les ossements des saints en en faisant jaillir des miracles éclatants.'

[208] Ishai of Seleucia-Ctesiphon, *On the Martyrs*, in Scher (ed.), *Traités*, 49: 'Puis nous avons montré qu'en les honorant, nous ne les adorons nullement du culte de latrie, mais qu'en les aimant et en nous appliquant à faire mémoire d'eux, nous proclamerons que nous avons la même foi qu'eux, et nous rendrons hommage à leur Seigneur, pour le nom duquel ils ont été couronnés.'

can be little doubt that that cult played a prominent part in the culture of Persian Christianity at this time. 'Even now', as Ishai affirmed, 'we build churches dedicated to them, in order that we may gather there and render unto them the veneration that is due.'[209] Only now did Ishai permit himself to address a concluding prayer to the martyrs themselves: 'May the prayers of the holy confessors make us worthy to hear, with all the martyrs and confessors of our Lord, this word of Christ: "Come, you who are blessed by my Father, possess as a heritage the Kingdom that has been prepared for before the foundation of the world." (Matt 25.34)'[210] The meaning of this prayer, the single reference in Ishai's *On the Martyrs* to the saints' posthumous intercessions, will become clear as we discuss the teachings of Catholicos Timothy. But already, Ishai's allusion to the eternal Kingdom, accessible only to man after the reunion of body and soul, made it unlikely that he, any more than Ephrem before him, foresaw the saints' fulfilment of his prayer before the awesome day of the Resurrection.

But Ishai was not a lone voice. At some point during the 620s, half a century after Ishai's probable death *circa* 570, Babai the Great (551–628), perhaps the most influential of all East Syrian theologians of the late Sasanian period, recounted in his *Life of George* the deeds and passion of one of Persian Christianity's latter-day saints.[211] Like Qardagh before him, Giwargis, who chose the baptismal name of George, was a Zoroastrian nobleman who incurred the wrath of the King of Kings for converting to Christianity. Martyred in 615, Giwargis-George was among the most prominent of Khusro II's victims. Babai's role in committing the Church of the East to a strictly dyophysite Christology is well known.[212] But just as Babai denied that the divinity suffered when Christ was nailed to the cross, so George's soul remained invulnerable to the pain inflicted upon his body during his own crucifixion: as Khusro's archers shot upon him at the climax of the Life, the martyr, already crucified, calmly counted the wounds on one hand.[213] Indeed, Babai made the analogy almost explicit by affirming that '[e]ven here we can see the similarity between the servant and his Lord'.[214] Yet the distinctive East Syrian doctrine of Christ was not the only theological paradigm that influenced Babai's representation of his sainted subject. Like Ishai before him, Babai knew that the essential inactivity of the disembodied human soul could not be avoided, not even by the saints. Thus, even as he hoped for the saint's prayers on his behalf, Babai reiterated that the saint's activity beyond the grave would only resume with the reunification of body and soul at the Resurrection. 'For the sake of the new man', Babai affirmed, 'will his body and soul be renewed on the day of Resurrection. With a burning lamp will he go out to greet his Lord, enter with him into the spiritual bridal chamber and enjoy unspeakable blessings.'[215]

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[209] Ishai of Seleucia-Ctesiphon, *On the Martyrs*, in Scher (ed.), *Traités*, 49: 'Nous bâtissons encore des temple sous leur invocation pour nous y réunir et leur rendre le respect qui leur est dû.'

[210] Ishai of Seleucia-Ctesiphon, *On the Martyrs*, in Scher (ed.), *Traités*, 52: 'Que les prières des saints confesseurs nous rendent dignes d'entendre, avec tous les martyrs et les confesseurs de Notre-Seigneur le Christ, cette parole: "Venez, vous qui êtes bénis de mon Père, possédez en héritage de royaume qui vous a été préparé avant la fondation du monde."'

[211] The Syriac can be found in P. Bedjan, *Histoire de Mar Jabalaha* (Paris, 1895), 416–571. There is an abridged German translation in Braun, *Akten*, 221–77, and Hoffmann, *Auszüge*, 91–115. A French summary can be found in J. B. Chabot, *Synodicon Orientale* (Paris, 1902), 625–34. For commentary, see Reinink (1999); Hoffmann, *Auszüge*, 115–21; also Brock (1976) 27–31.

CATHOLICOS TIMOTHY I AND EAST SYRIAN ESCHATOLOGY IN THE EARLY ABBASID CALIPHATE

This study has considered Gregory the Great's *Dialogues on the Miracles of the Italian Fathers* against a backdrop of a widespread debate across the East Roman world at the end of the sixth century about the cult of the saints, in which, it has been argued, the defence of the saints as effective intercessors and wonder-workers beyond the grave came to hinge upon a particular view of the fundamental nature of the soul, particularly in its disembodied state *post mortem*. This present chapter has argued that it is possible to chart this debate on an even broader canvas, one that includes parallel developments in late antique Syriac-speaking Christianity. Many of the questions about the saints and the posthumous condition of the human soul which Greek and Latin authors in early Byzantium confronted, from the end of the sixth down to at least the second half of the seventh centuries, also engaged Christian writers in the East Syrian tradition. Moreover, it is clear that, during this same period, a consensus emerged 'east of the Euphrates' that maintained that the disembodied human soul was essentially inactive before the Resurrection. Diametrically opposed in many ways to the ongoing activity of the soul *post mortem* that was articulated by a significant majority of those who wrote either on the soul or the saints' cult in the Roman empire, the East Syrian doctrine of 'soul sleep' carried ramifications for the cult of the saints, and the office of the dead, in the Church of the East. Owing to the enduring strength of a Resurrection-orientated eschatological paradigm, East Syrian Christianity embraced a view of the soul's *post-mortem* inactivity before the Resurrection that Gregory the Great and his contemporary, Eustratius of Constantinople, rejected out of fear for its ramifications for the cult of the saints and the church's ritual care of the dead: in 790, as we have seen, Catholicos Timothy I of the Church of the East summoned Nestorius, the newly elected bishop of Beth-Nuhadran in northern Iraq was summoned to Baghdad to recant of his 'unorthodox' opinions on the posthumous activity of souls before the Resurrection by anathematizing 'all those who say that souls feel, know, act, praise [God] or have use [of intercessions] after their departure from the body. For, no such thing comes to them until they put on their bodies [once again].[216]

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[212] Chediath (1982) 71–6, 168–71.

[213] Babai, *Life of George* 69 in Braun, *Akten*, 270.

[214] Babai, *Life of George* 67 in Braun, *Akten*, 269: : 'Auch hierin können wir die Ähnlichkeit des Dieners mit seinem Herrn sehen'.

[215] Babai, *Life of George* 69 in Braun, *Akten*, 271: 'Zu einem neuen Menschen wird sein Leib und seine Seele am Tage der Auferstehung erneuert werden; mit brennender Lampe wird er seinem Herrn entgegengehen, mit ihm in das geistige Brautgemach eingehen und an den unaussprechlichen Seligkeiten sich erfreuen.'

Elected as Catholicos of the Church of the East (a community now subject not to Persian but Arab rule) in 780, Timothy's interest in the nature of the Christian afterlife was long-standing.[217] That his views were the product of deep reflection can readily be seen from his correspondence, *circa* 780–800, with Rabban Boktisho, an esteemed doctor in the service of the Caliph al-Mahdi (775–85) and a deacon in the East Syrian church.[218] Far more extensive than the brief synodical acts of 790, this letter provides an open window onto Timothy's understanding of the inherited East Syrian tradition of soul sleep. Indeed, throughout the opening decade of his catholicate, Timothy seems to have sought to systematize the eschatological doctrines of the Church of the East, a process in which the *anathemata* pronounced by Bishop Nestorius played an important part. Secondarily, the questions which Timothy treated in this letter are also remarkable from the perspective of Gregory the Great's late sixth-century *Dialogues*, as Timothy addressed many of the same issues Gregory addressed in his fourth dialogue, and after him the Greek Question and Answer writers of the seventh century, notably Anastasius of Sinai.[219] These likenesses display how far Timothy's letter to Boktisho, like the eschatological doctrines endorsed at the Synod of Baghdad in 790, stood at the end of a long debate about the Christian afterlife across multiple linguistic and cultural boundaries during late antiquity, one which, as we have seen, had an important bearing on how the cult of the saints was represented. Boktisho's vocation as a physician is also significant inasmuch as Timothy's letter may have sought to bridge some of the perceived distance between biblical and physiological accounts of the human soul and its fate *post mortem*.[220]

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[216] See above, 239.

[217] On the accusations of simony that attended Timothy's election, see Bidawid (1956) 2–4; and now Berti (2009) 152–69. For the Church of the East under the Arabs, see Griffith (2008) 133–4 and Berti (2009) 67–84; and for the transition from Sasanian authority, Morony (1984) 332–72; Erhart (1996); and Payne (2009).

Timothy's letter resembles a treatise and is presented with seven chapters, each of which responded to questions which Boktisho may have posed to Timothy in a (lost) previous letter.[221] These were as follows:

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[218] Timothy I, *Ep.* 2. The Syriac text with Latin translation can be found in *Timothae Patriarchae I: Epistulae*, vol. 1, O. Braun (ed.), CSCO 74–5, Scriptores Syri 67 (2 parts), series secunda (Rome and Paris, 1915), I, 21–47. There is no modern language translation of Timothy's correspondence; the English quoted here is my own from the Latin. A French summary can be found in Bidawid (1956) 17 ff., with table of dates at 73–5. This must now be checked against Berti (2009) 50–62, with table. See also Braun (1901) and (1902*a*). The Boktisho here addressed would appear to be Boktisho bar Gurgis, rather than his better-known son, Gabriel bar Boktisho: Bidawid (1956) 64; Berti (2009) 61. With their origins in the Elamite city of Gundashapur, the Boktisho family served the caliphs for at least three generations: Putman (1975) 97–101; Braun (1901) 149–50. See also Berti (2009) 245–8.

[219] See esp. the appendix to this book below.

[220] On Timothy's use of medical metaphors, see Berti (2009) 250.

[221] The collection of Timothy's surviving letters, extensive though it is, is far from a complete record of his correspondence. On the formation of the collection, see Berti (2009) 62–4. It appears to have been made under the direction of Sergius,

1) What is the nature of the soul and its function?
2) Where is the soul while in the body?
3) Where does the soul go once it is separated from the body?
4) What degree of consciousness remains to the soul after its departure from the body?
5) After its separation from the body, can the soul remember what (whether for good or bad) it did while it was in the body, its tabernacle?
6) Does the soul obtain any benefit, advantage, or comfort from what is carried out for it at the Lord's altar?
7) Does the soul depart the body by virtue of God's specific command, or by chance, and by disease?

Not all of these questions are relevant to the current discussion and only those pertinent to the East Syrian doctrine of posthumous psychological inactivity and its practical ramifications will be considered here. To an intriguing extent, given the continuing uncertainty that surrounds the use of Aristotle's *De Anima* in this period, Timothy's answers recall many of the salient features of Aristotelian psychology.

Timothy began the letter by defending the soul's existence despite its invisibility.[222] The subject recalls Gregory's rebuttal of Deacon Peter's rationalist-inspired doubts at the outset of the fourth dialogue, although Timothy was more interested in demonstrating the soul's existence in the life here below, than in persuading a sceptical audience of its ongoing existence *post mortem*. Like Gregory, however, Timothy compared the soul's invisibility to God's. God was infinite while the human mind was finite; indeed, God could in no way be perceived in his own substance by any creature whatsoever—not even Christ's mortal human nature.[223] Recalling Aristotle's dictum concerning the soul's reliance on the body, Timothy asserted that the human mind could only enquire into those things that were by nature intelligible and sensible, for, '[b]y the senses we recognize everything

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Metropolitan of Elam, *circa* 805, which explains the absence of any letters posterior to that date, despite Timothy's further fifteen years of activity as catholicos.

[222] Klinge (1939) 368–9 notes that '[d]ies scheint für die Syrer aller Zeiten ein besonderes, wichtiges Problem gewesen zu sein.'

[223] Timothy I, *Ep.* 2, Braun (ed.), CSCO 74–5, SS, 2nd ser., vol. 67, I, 22. See also Braun (1902*b*) 307: 'wie der Logos und der Geist, so kann auch die Menschheit des Herrn seine Gottheit nicht sehen, wie der Sohn, der Logos und der hervorgehende Geist die Natur Gottes sehen.'

that is sensible, but not that which is insensible'.[224] The ease with which the five bodily senses could perceive any sensible thing could, however, be contrasted with the difficulty of perceiving the existence of those things that were intelligible but insensible (such as those invisible by nature), like God and the soul. Recalling Gregory the Great's advice to the Deacon Peter, Timothy recognized that such things could only be indirectly known to human reason through their activities in the sensible, which could be perceived by the bodily senses. Yet, with its highly physiological account of human sense perception, Aristotle's *De Anima* could have influenced Timothy's belief that 'every intelligible thing is perceived and known not in its own substance, but in its activities through something else'.[225] In any case, Timothy affirmed that the existence either of God or the soul could only be through the activities which each performed through visible, sensible bodies. Again, this readily recalls Gregory's 'proof', in his fourth dialogue, of the soul's presence in the body here below through the body's movements. Gregory went on to argue on the basis of this analogy that the soul's ongoing activity beyond the grave could be perceived in the miracles which the saints' souls performed through their relics at their shrines.[226] Owing to the East Syrian tradition of soul sleep, Timothy did not advert to those miracles here: as we have seen, for Ishai, the souls of the saints were unconscious of the miracles which their relics performed; indeed, how far their souls could be seen as actively cooperating in these miracles was not at all clear. In any case, in his letter to Boktisho Timothy's interest lay not in proving the soul's continued existence in the next life, but its plausibility as a 'real thing' at all. Nevertheless, as far as the activity of the soul before its separation from the body was concerned, the catholicos reached the same conclusion as Gregory had at Rome (even if Timothy expressed it in more sophisticated terms). 'If the soul is intelligible and incorporeal', Timothy affirmed 'and every intelligible and incorporeal thing is apprehended and known to be through its activity, then it is evident that the soul can be apprehended and known to exist through its activity [in the body]'.[227]

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[224] Timothy I, *Ep.* 2, Braun (ed.), CSCO 74–5, SS, 2nd ser., vol. 67, I, 23: *Per sensus cognoscimus omnia sensibilia, non autem et non sensibilia*. Timothy continued: 'Now, the nature of these things is invisible and completely insensible and inapprehensible through the senses, so that it is necessary that they be apprehended and recognized as existing through their activity': Timothy I, *Ep.* 2, Braun (ed.), CSCO, series secunda, vol. 67, p. 24: *Nunc autem invisibilis est earum natura, et omnino insensibilis et per sensus inapprehensibilis, ita ut necessario per actum suum esse deprehendatur et cognoscatur*.

[225] See, for example, Aristotle, *De Anima*, 2.4–12 in Lawson-Tancred (trans.), 172–82. Sense perception for Aristotle was a form of suffering (πασχεῖν), of which the soul was inherently incapable without the sense organ: Hamlyn (1959).

[226] For reasons that are germane to the East Syrian psychology and eschatology, it is unlikely that, even had the Catholicos confronted such doubt directly, his 'proof' would have included—as Gregory's did—the healings performed by the saints at their shrines as proof for the post-mortem existence (let alone activity) of the soul.

Timothy moved from here to consider a number of questions that stemmed from the perceptibility of the soul through its activities. These questions included the nature of the soul's activity, and whether or not it was a substance, as well as its purpose. Tantalizingly paraphrasing Aristotle's functionalist view, Timothy asserted that 'the activity of the soul is to vivify the body and endow it with reason'.[228] As Aristotle reasoned in *De Anima*, this view was the result of a simple philosophical choice: either the body gave life and reason to itself, which was patently impossible given that the body died; or its vitality and rationality derived from the soul's union with it. Since 'everything that gives life to something else necessarily exists', Timothy wrote, 'it is necessarily said that the soul exists'.[229] For the same reason, Timothy reasoned that the soul was also possessed of its own substance. For, as to the body belonged its own substance, and the soul vivified the body, the soul must be said also to have a substance of its own. As Timothy asked, '[i]f anyone says that the soul is not a substance, then something which is not is found to be the cause of something that is. How can this be?'[230] Timothy was not, of course, suggesting (with the Stoics) that the soul was a material substance.[231] Rather, he appears to have understood that the soul, despite its dependence upon the body for faculties such as sense perception, possessed its own, separable reality apart from the body. To Timothy, moreover, substantiality was clearly synonymous with existence: without constituting a substance (as Boktisho had perhaps alleged, possibly 'misinterpreting' Aristotle's view that the soul was the body's form), a thing could not properly be said to be:

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[227] Timothy I, *Ep*. 2, Braun (ed.), CSCO 74–5, SS, 2nd ser., vol. 67, I, 24: *Si anima natura intelligibilis et incorporea est, omnia autem intelligibilia et incorporea per actum suum esse deprehenduntur et cognoscuntur: evidens ergo est, quod anima per actum suum cognoscitur et deprehenditur esse.*

[228] Aristotle, *De Anima*, 2.2 in Lawson-Tancred (trans.), 161: '[. . .] the soul is primarily that by which we live and perceive and think'.

[229] Timothy I, *Ep*. 2, Braun (ed.), CSCO 74–5, SS, 2nd ser., vol. 67, I, 24: *omne autem cuius vita et motione aliud vivit et movetur, necessario existit, necessario ergo dicitur existere anima.*

[230] Timothy I, *Ep*. 2, Braun (ed.), CSCO 74–5, SS, 2nd ser., vol. 67, I, 24: *Si autem aliquis dicat, animam non esse substantiam, tunc invenitur id quod non est, causa esse eius quod est.*

> The activity of the soul is the life of the body, but every activity arises out of a source of power and every source of power belongs to a substance or is from a substance. Every substance consists in itself; therefore, the soul exists, because a substance consists in itself. But we apprehend the soul's existence primarily through its activity.[232]

This insistence on the soul's substantiality distances Timothy from modern interpretations of Aristotelian psychology which favour a non-substantialist attitude. Timothy's argument, however, that for the soul to vivify the body which is a substance, it must be a substance itself, is surprisingly close to Aristotle's own words: 'It must [. . .] be the case that the soul is substance as the form of a natural body which potentially has life, and since this substance [the body] is actuality, the soul will be the actuality of such a body'.[233] Moreover, Timothy, on the basis that it was the property of the soul as a vital substance to endow life, reasoned that immortality also belonged to the soul's essential nature, since 'everything that lives and moves by its own life is immortal'.[234] This was not obviously Aristotle's view, but possibly so, at least concerning that part of the soul that is intellect, since 'the mind seems to be a substance that comes to be in the animal and to be imperishable'.[235] Indeed, if Timothy were relying on *De Anima* here, his interpretation could be compared to later readings of Aristotle's psychology in the Latin West.[236]

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[231] On Stoic psychology, see Long (1999). The soul, while corporeal, was extended throughout the body as its governing principle, manifesting itself in human beings in the capacity for rational reflection. The soul was seated in the heart and closely linked to the blood, without, however, actually being identical with it.

[232] Timothy I, *Ep.* 2, Braun (ed.), CSCO 74–5, SS, 2nd ser., vol. 67, I, 24–5: *Si vita corporis actus anima est: omnis actus ex potentia oritur, omnis autem potentia substantiae et ex substantia est, omnis autem substantia in se subsistit; ergo anima existit, quia substantia in se subsistens est. Sed per actum animae primum eius existentiam deprehendimus.*

[233] Aristotle, *De Anima*, 2.1 in Lawson-Tancred (trans.), 157. Cf. Aristotle, *De Anima*, 2.2 in Lawson-Tancred (trans.), 161: '[the soul] will be a kind of account and form, not matter and the subject. For substance is spoken of in three ways, as form, as matter, and as the composite [. . .]'.

[234] Timothy I, *Ep.* 2, Braun (ed.), CSCO 74–5, SS, 2nd ser., vol. 67, I, 24: *omnia autem quae propria vita vivunt et moventur, immortalia sunt.*

Timothy further asserted that the fact that the soul was both living and rational was confirmed at the moment of death, as when the soul departed from the body, the body ceased to be vital, rational, or active. Timothy recognized that some people argued (one remembers Deacon Peter in Gregory the Great's fourth dialogue) that this was no proof that the soul did not at that point also cease to exist, but countered with the argument that the soul could not give life to something else if it were not itself essentially vital, '[f]or it cannot give to something else that which it does not possess according to its own substance and nature'.[237] The implication was, apparently, that the soul's essential substance and nature, its vitality and rationality, were not altered by any change that took place in the condition of a separate substance, such as the change that took place in the body through death. In this regard, Timothy declared to be mistaken any comparison between the posthumous fate of human beings and animals, for while human souls did not perish upon the death of the body, those of the other animals did.[238] Of course, this presents a further point of contact between Timothy's treatise and Gregory's fourth dialogue, as well as Eustratius's *On the State of Souls*, where some at least of those who disputed the saints' posthumous miracles seem to have done so on the grounds of the soul's perishability.[239]

Thus far, Timothy has elaborated in his letter to Boktisho a basic view of the soul that, for all its possible (but by no means clear) dependence upon Aristotle, was at least potentially compatible with the ongoing activity of the disembodied souls of the saints *post mortem*, as his large agreement here with Gregory's opening presentation in the fourth dialogue demonstrates. But the further Timothy proceeds to disclose his view of the soul's condition after death, the clearer it becomes that his view of the soul's union with the body was significantly different from that which our Byzantine writers supposed. In his insistence on the soul's fundamental inactivity apart from the body, Timothy can be seen as articulating the traditional East Syrian doctrine of soul sleep in its most developed and mature form so far. Timothy's views as much of the saints' cult as the church's care for the dead, emerge, therefore, in his letter to Boktisho as having been surprisingly close to those which Eustratius and Gregory rebutted at the end of the sixth century, without being identical with them.

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[235] Aristotle, *De Anima*, 1.4 in Lawson-Tancred (trans.), 146.

[236] See n. 97, p. 263 above.

[237] Timothy I, *Ep*. 2, Braun (ed.), CSCO 74–5, SS, 2nd ser., vol. 67, I, 25: *Neque enim alii dare posset, quod ipsa secundum substantiam et naturam non haberet.*

[238] See Timothy I, *Ep*. 2, Braun (ed.), CSCO 74–5, SS, 2nd ser., vol. 67, I, 27: *Animae ergo rationales hominum, quae non videntur, neque mortales, neque corruptibiles sunt; animae autem visibiles bestiarum irrationales, mortales, ergo et corruptibiles sunt.*

[239] See the second chapter of this book above, 94–6.

Although one occasionally senses the potential influence of Aristotelian notions of the soul's entelechy, the importance which Timothy ascribed to the body as a precondition for the soul's activity (as opposed to its vitality or rationality) reflected the long Syriac and East Syrian tradition before him, which we have seen articulated in writers like Narsai and Ephrem.[240] Thus, Timothy affirmed that the soul was created by God with the specific purpose of being joined to the body 'for the perfection and composition of a single natural and personal man'.[241] The separation of soul from the body that death brought about was temporary and insignificant from the point of view of eternity, for soul and body would be reunited following the Resurrection. Thus, Timothy affirmed, 'man is neither only soul nor only body, but [man is] both together, and man exists from both of these'.[242] Indeed, as 'the soul was created in the body and with the body from nothing; for this reason the soul possesses all knowledge in the body, in the body and with the body'.[243] There could be no question for Timothy, therefore, that the soul must be inactive once death served to separate it from the body: '[O]utside the body or without it, the soul has no actuality according to perfection'.[244] Naturally, this had ramifications for the nature of the Christian afterlife. It has been observed that Syriac-speaking writers such as Narsai or Ephrem speculated that, after the body's death righteous souls entered into 'Eden' and the souls of the unrighteous into a place outside this Eden. Indeed, the souls of the saints were only admitted into Paradise, the place of ultimate eschatological glorification, following the Resurrection. Like Ishai, however, Timothy seems to have conceived of Paradise as the temporary region to which the souls of the saints proceeded in anticipation of their entry into the Kingdom of heaven after the Resurrection. The souls of the wicked, by contrast, were confined outside this place. But the very physical reality of this Paradise mandated the soul's reunion with the body. '[T]he souls of the righteous do not take enjoyment in Paradise, nor are the souls of the unrighteous punished outside Paradise', he affirmed. 'For what enjoyment could incorporeal souls derive from the fruits and flowers of corporeal trees?'[245] Although both categories of souls appear to have remained largely inert in either of these regions, Timothy explained that the presence of the souls of the saints in Paradise before the Resurrection, like the confinement of the souls of the wicked outside it, indicated the different regions that would be the fate of each group after the Resurrection—the 'Kingdom' and 'hell', respectively.[246] But clearly such a view expressed a radical divergence from the notion of immediate retribution which both Gregory and Eustratius had earlier articulated further to the west.

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[240] For the importance of Aristotle to East Syrian notions of the soul, see esp. Gavin (1920) 116. Although there are a number of intriguing parallels, its actual influence is difficult to prove before the tenth century. Among Aristotle's other works, however, Timothy was certain familiar with *Topics*, and sought out *Sophistic Refutations*, *Rhetoric* and *Poetics*: Brock (1999*a*) 236; Troupeau (1991) 5; also Berti (2009) 321–31. Indeed, Timothy played a leading role in obtaining and translating Greek (largely Aristotelian) philosophy into first Syriac, then Arabic for Caliphs al-Mahdi (775–85) and Harun al-Rashid (786–809): Griffith (2008) 45–8; Gutas (1998) 61–74, 136–8; Fiey (1980) 36–7. Earlier East Syrian patriarchs had also been interested in Aristotle, with Henanisho I (685–92/700) and Aba II (741–51) both composing commentaries on Aristotelian logic: Baum and Winkler (2000) 45 and 59.

[241] Timothy I, *Ep.* 2, Braun (ed.), CSCO 74–5, SS, 2nd ser., vol. 67, I, 27: *Ambo enim propter perfectionem unius hominis creata et constituta sunt.*

[242] Timothy I, *Ep.* 2, Braun (ed.), CSCO 74–5, SS, 2nd ser., vol. 67, I, 27: *Ideo neque sola anima, neque solum corpus homo est, sed ambo simul, et ex ambobus homo consistit.*

The soul's total inactivity before the Resurrection led Timothy to elaborate further when he addressed the next of Boktisho's questions, namely, 'Where do souls go after they have been separated from the body?'[247] Interestingly, Timothy began by discounting a rival view within his own tradition, whereby the soul was thought to reside in the decaying body's bones. It can be traced back as early as Aphrahat the Persian in the fourth century.[248] Doubtless owing to Aphrahat's enduring prestige, Timothy did not condemn this view, although he clearly found it inadequate for suggesting the soul's own composition from bodily matter. Timothy, however, recapitulated his view that, with the death of the body, the soul proceeded to 'Paradise', where it slumbered inactive until the Resurrection of the body and the admission of soul and body into the new, eschatological reality of the Kingdom.[249] Indeed, Timothy affirmed that Jesus' disembodied soul had itself proceeded to this Paradise on Easter Saturday, ascending to the Kingdom only after the Resurrection of his body. Moreover, Jesus had taken with him to Paradise 'the [Holy] Thief, together Enoch and Elijah and all the souls of the righteous'.[250] In this Paradise, according to Timothy, the disembodied souls of the latter-day saints, too, awaited the body's resurrection, vital but inactive and inert as if asleep; while, for their part, the souls of the wicked dwelt in a place outside the Garden. As far as Timothy was concerned (and in marked contrast with Gregory and Eustratius), this much was orthodoxy which (Aphrahat's view notwithstanding) 'must be firmly believed'.[251]

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[243] Timothy I, *Ep*. 2, Braun (ed.), CSCO 74–5, SS, 2nd ser., vol. 67, I, 28: *anima in hoc corpore et cum eo ex nihilo creata est. Ideoque in eo et cum eo omnes scientias habet [. . .].*

[244] Timothy I, *Ep*. 2, Braun (ed.), CSCO 74–5, SS, 2nd ser., vol. 67, I, 28: *extra autem illud et sine ipso secundum perfectionem actualitatis nullam habet.*

[245] Timothy I, *Ep*. 2, Braun (ed.), CSCO 74–5, SS, 2nd ser., vol. 67, I, 30: *Non tamquam animae iustorum in paradiso delectarentur, iniquorum extra paradisum cruciarentur. Quid enim delactationis haberent animae incorporae e fructibus arborum corporearum et floribus?*

[246] Timothy I, *Ep*. 2, Braun (ed.), CSCO 74–5, SS, 2nd ser., vol. 67, I, 30.

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[247] Timothy I, *Ep*. 2, Braun (ed.), CSCO 74–5, SS, 2nd ser., vol. 67, I, 31: *Quo anima a corpore separata migret?*

[248] See Timothy I, *Ep*. 2, Braun (ed.), CSCO 74–5, SS, 2nd ser., vol. 67, I, 31: *Anima enim quia coniuncta est cum amore corporis, cum quo germinaverint et exculta erat, corpus autem post solutionem in elementa redit, idcirco, aiunt, anima post separationem in elementis illis, in quae corpus solutum est, habitat, usque ad diem, quo ipsum iterum rectum, fulgens et Deo simile induet*. For its origins in Aphrahat, see Braun's note on the same page, who asserts that the notion can also be found in the Talmud.

[249] In fact, like Ephrem, Timothy also began his own reflection on the soul's post-mortem condition with Jesus' words to the Holy Thief in Lk 23.43: Timothy I, *Ep*. 2, Braun (ed.), CSCO 74–5, SS, 2nd ser., vol. 67, I, 31.

[250] Timothy I, *Ep*. 2, Braun (ed.), CSCO 74–5, SS, 2nd ser., vol. 67, I, 31: *Ipse in anima sua locum ingressus est, e quo Adam exierat, et latronem secum introduxit, simulque Henoch et Eliam, et omnes animas iustorum secum introduxit*.

[251] Timothy I, *Ep*. 2, Braun (ed.), CSCO 74–5, SS, 2nd ser., vol. 67, I, 31–2: *Ergo firmiter credendum est animam post separationem a corpore, si virtutes operata est, in locum amoenum paradisi, sin autem mala operata est, ad congregationem extra paradism iussu Dei migrare, ibique esse usque ad diem resurrectionis*.

As we have seen, Ishai of Seleucia considered that the souls of the saints (despite their entry, in his view, into Paradise *before* the Resurrection) were not aware of the miracles which their relics performed at their shrines. In his treatise *On the Martyrs* Ishai did not explain why this was so, but that it was an aspect of the soul's inactivity *post mortem* that flowed from the soul's prior dependence upon the body for its faculties of perceptions becomes clear in Timothy's account. To begin, Timothy carefully distinguished the various faculties attributed to the soul.[252] Timothy then divided these faculties into those which were natural to the soul's substance (such as reason and will) and those which arose only out of the soul's union with the body (such as anger and desire). This distinction proved crucial for those faculties which the soul retained after death. For, only those natural to the soul's own substance (e.g. reason and will) remained after separation from the body; the others (e.g. desire and anger) it completely relinquished until the Resurrection. Yet Timothy introduced a further distinction between those natural faculties which the soul continued to enjoy 'in actuality' after the death of the body, and those which the soul only continued to exercise only 'in virtuality'. Vitality (the soul's essential property of being alive) was a faculty of the first kind; but reason and will, knowledge and perception were faculties of the second sort, implanted by God in the soul at the moment of its creation, but only 'activated' through the soul's conjunction with the body.[253] Thus, Timothy likened the condition of the disembodied soul after death to that of the unborn foetus in the womb. The soul possessed, he affirmed:

> its vitality in real actuality; its will and reason – and you might say, its knowledge – not in actuality, but in virtuality; and, although the soul is living by nature, it cannot perceive unless it is in the world. It is the same when the soul is out of the body [. . .].[254]

Because the purpose of the soul was to bring the single human person to completion, there were few faculties which the soul retained after its disembodiment, indeed perhaps only vitality and mobility, since even apart from the body Timothy thought the soul remained alive and 'in motion'.

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[252] Timothy I, *Ep.* 2, Braun (ed.), CSCO 74–5, SS, 2nd ser., vol. 67, I, 32.

[253] Timothy I, *Ep.* 2, Braun (ed.), CSCO 74–5, SS, 2nd ser., vol. 67, I, 32.

[254] Timothy I, *Ep.* 2, Braun (ed.), CSCO 74–5, SS, 2nd ser., vol. 67, I, 32: *vitalitatem suam realiter et actualiter possidet, libertatem autem suam et rationem, dicere potes scientiam suam, non actualiter, sed virtualiter possidet, et quamvis viva in natura sua, non sentit vel si in mundo sit; ita etiam e corpore egressa [. . .].*

The consequences of such a doctrine for the East Syrian cult of saints Timothy then set out in answer to Boktisho's fifth question, that is, whether '[a]fter its departure from the body, does the soul perceive those things which it did while dwelling in the body? And, after its departure, does it remember any of the good or bad things that it did while in the body, its tent?'[255] In his reply, Timothy emphasized three points. First, that both the perception of the world here below and memory of it depended upon faculties of the soul that were uniquely effective in conjunction with particular organs of the physical body, without which the disembodied soul could neither perceive nor remember.[256] Secondly, the ability to perceive or remember the soul's good (or evil deeds) in the body would anticipate the Final Judgement by revealing to the soul causes either for its eschatological reward or punishment and, since the soul accomplished either its good or evil deeds through the body, this could not justifiably take place before the Resurrection.[257] Thirdly, to attribute perception of good or evil to the disembodied soul *post mortem* would only make sense if the same faculty of the will to carry out a course of action in response were simultaneously attributed to the soul in this state. But, Timothy reminded Boktisho, this could not be for the will was a faculty the soul only enjoyed in virtuality after separation from the body and because, if the choice of acting either for good or for evil after death remained to the souls of the deceased, the latter would risk losing their reward and sinners of ceasing to deserve their punishment.[258] With apparent reference to the saints' bodily relics, Timothy therefore affirmed:

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[255] Timothy I, *Ep.* 2, Braun (ed.), CSCO 74–5, SS, 2nd ser., vol. 67, I, 33: *Num post migrationem sentiat, quae fecerat in corpore habitans, et num sciat, postquam migravit, aliquid bonorum aut malorum, quae facta sunt in corpore, habitaculo eius?*

[256] See Timothy I, *Ep.* 2, Braun (ed.), CSCO 74–5, SS, 2nd ser., vol. 67, I, 33: *Sentire ergo omnino non de anima, sed proprie de corpore dicitur.*

[257] Timothy I, *Ep.* 2, Braun (ed.), CSCO 74–5, SS, 2nd ser., vol. 67, I, 34: *Si enim sciret omnia, quae fecerit in corpore, etiam sciret retributionem eis quae fecit in corpore servatam: et haec cum sciret, si esset anima iusta, per cognitionem operum bonorum, quae fecerat, et per cognitionem praemiorum servatorum, iam in felicitate regni caelorum habitaret. Si autem anima iniqua esset, per cognitionem malorum quae fecit, et per cognitionem tormenti malis servati, iam in tormento futuro esset.*

> How can a soul be said to feel or know those things which it did in the body, or those things which are done to it, once it has departed from the body, in what way it may be? Even while it [the soul] was in the body and inhabited it as if it were a temple for such a great length of days and years, the soul could never see or know these things or even itself according to its own substance, neither could it see or know in its own substance any other soul of the same kind as it or angel, nor finally the internal members of its own temple, the body, that is the bones or their marrow. For, it [the soul] acquires the sight and knowledge which it possesses of these internal things from those things which reach its corporeal eyes.[259]

It could not be imagined (as our hagiographers west of the Euphrates readily did), in other words, that the disembodied soul retained after death the same faculties it had enjoyed in the body. However close their union in this life, *post mortem*, souls were even ignorant of what the living did with their bodily remains. Clearly, this left no room for a view of the saints as active agents, after death, in the world here below—and the notion which we saw Eustratius and a number of authors of early Byzantine miracle collections articulate, whereby the disembodied human even retained its bodily appearance *post mortem*, Timothy doubtless viewed as absurd, however necessary it might have been to enable pilgrims to behold the desired apparition of a deceased saint. 'Thus', Timothy asked, 'will anyone say or believe that it [the soul] knows or feels anything that was done or is now done in its body, if, while it was in the body, it [the soul] could not see, feel or know these things [i.e. bones] that were hidden and concealed in its body?'[260] As we have seen in Ishai's *On the Martyrs*, there was no reason why Timothy's strong words here should not apply to the bodies of the saints themselves and the honours which contemporary Christians paid to them. That is to say, if the saints do not go about in constant attention to their bones in this life, why should they do so in their state of much-reduced activity *post mortem*? Indeed, in terms that paralleled the anathema he had prescribed for Bishop Nestorius in 790, Timothy advised Boktisho that, '[i]n order to avoid such absurdities, let no one say or believe that the soul, once it has abandoned the body, really has knowledge either of what it did in the body, or of what will befall it in retribution, or of what is now done around its body'.[261]

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[258] This recalled Narsai's objection to posthumous psychological activity in Krüger (1959) 204.

[259] Timothy I, *Ep.* 2, Braun (ed.), CSCO 74–5, SS, 2nd ser., vol. 67, I, 34: *Quomodo dicitur anima sentire et scire ea, quae in corpore fecit, aut quae in eo fiunt, postquam quomodumque ex eo migravit? Quae etiam, cum in eo esset et habitaret tamquam in templo tantam longitudinem dierum et annorum, neque seipsam unquam secundum substantiam vidit et cognovit, neque aliam animam eiusdem generis, aut angelum, denique neque templi, id est corporis sui, membrum internum, ossa aut eorum medullam secundum substantiam vidit aut novit; nam visionem aut scientiam, quas de his passionibus internis possidet, ex eis quae oculis corporeis attingit, acquirit.*

Naturally, this did not mean that Timothy, any less than Ishai before him, did not approve of the veneration of the saints. In a letter he despatched *circa* 795/8 to the Christian community at Basra in southern Iraq, Timothy defended the saints' cult in the strongest terms.[262] Outlining a different conception of the relationship between the saints' souls and their relics than that which was perhaps widely imagined in Byzantium, Timothy's letter to the Christians of Basra nevertheless indicates that some confusion existed in the East Syrian church about the cult of the saints and the favours that could be expected to flow from the honour paid to the holy departed. The context of Timothy's intervention in the affairs of the monastery appears to have been a dispute over the propriety of the cult of the saints' relics. Timothy urged the objectors to take the same care towards the saints' lifeless bodies, as they would towards the saints' souls. For, if they did not object to recognizing the special honour due to the saints on account of their exceptional service of

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[260] Timothy I, *Ep*. 2, Braun (ed.), CSCO 74–5, SS, 2nd ser., vol. 67, I, 34: *Eam ergo, quae, cum in corpore sit, nec videt, neque sentit, neque novit, quae in eius corpore latent et abscondita sunt, dicet et credet aliquis, scire aut sentire quae in corpore eius facta sunt aut fiunt, postquam ab eo exivit et recessit?*

[261] Timothy I, *Ep*. 2, Braun (ed.), CSCO 74–5, SS, 2nd ser., vol. 67, I, 35: *Ad evitandas has absurditates nemo dicat aut credat, animam, postquam e corpore discessit, actualiter congitionem habere sive eorum quae in corpore suo fecit, sive eorum quae ipsi in retributione accident, sive eorum quae nunc circa corpus eius fiunt.*

[262] Timothy I, *Ep*. 36. The Syriac text with Latin translation can be found in *Epistulae*, Braun (ed.) CSCO 74–5, SS, 2nd ser., vol. 67, I, 164–83. The date of the letter given here is from Bidawid (1956) 73–5. Berti dates it more cautiously after 790: Berti (2009) 61. It should be read in the light of the two letters that precede it in the collection.

God, and if the saints retained that honour in the next life, then, neither should the Basrans despise their bodily remains. 'For', Timothy wrote, 'if soul and body laboured together equally and interdependently (*mutuo*), their share in the work and labour is equal, and so is their reward, possessing all but equal dues'.[263] Although, from their abode in Paradise, the saints in their disembodied state could perceive neither whether their bodies were honoured or despised, he continued:

> if the saints struggled for virtue in both soul and body, and if to their souls has now been given Paradise as a dwelling-place and an image of the Kingdom of Heaven, *although they remain there without sense-perception or knowledge until the resurrection of the body*, therefore, to their bodies must also be assigned a lofty dwelling-place in those parts of the church-building near the apse, which is called 'paradise' [. . .].[264]

Remarkably, Timothy believed that the saints' bodily relics must be venerated, 'even though they are completely dumb and lifeless'—a description of perhaps shocking banality for those accustomed to more extravagant Latin and Greek depictions of relics' miraculous powers.[265] Yet even in this lifeless state, the saints' relics remained, in Timothy's words, 'temples of the Holy Spirit', for the saints' bodies, he said, were baptized as much as their souls.[266] Thus, Timothy maintained that 'it is shameful that God should honour his servants' souls, *even though lacking bodies they cannot perceive this honour*, while we despise and condemn the bodies of God's servants'.[267]

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[263] Timothy I, *Ep*. 36, Braun (ed.), CSCO 74–5, SS, 2nd ser., vol. 67, I, 181: *Si enim anima et corpus aequaliter et mutuo laboraverunt; eorum autem quorum par est ministerium et labor, eorum etiam est merces, et coronas haud inaequales habent.*

[264] Timothy I, *Ep*. 36, Braun (ed.), CSCO 74–5, SS, 2nd ser., vol. 67, I, 181: *Et si iusti in anima, inquam, et corpore certamina pro virtute pugnaverunt, et si animabus adhuc paradisus, tamquam typus, pro regno caelorum in habitationem datus est, etsi sine sensu et sine scientia usque ad resurrectionem corporum ibi commorantur; ergo et corporibus sanctorum, tamquam typus paradisi, habitatio eximia in locis paradiso ecclesiae vicinis assignanda est [. . .].* My italics. For this reason, the part of the church-building near the apse was called 'paradise': see Anonymi Auctoris, *Expositio officiorum*, Connolly (ed.), CSCO 64, SS, 2nd ser., vol. 91, 90–3.

[265] Timothy I, *Ep*. 36, Braun (ed.), CSCO 74–5, SS, 2nd ser., vol. 67, I, 181: *etsi omnino sine sensu et sine vita sunt.*

[266] Timothy I, *Ep*. 36, Braun (ed.), CSCO 74–5, SS, 2nd ser., vol. 67, I, 182.

[267] Timothy I, *Ep*. 36, Braun (ed.), CSCO 74–5, SS, 2nd ser., vol. 67, I, 181: *Turpissimum enim est, Deum animas servorum honorare, etsi sine corporibus suis*

The unity of Timothy's thought here with his letter to Boktisho and the canons of the synod of 790 demonstrates the systematic approach which Timothy applied to eschatological doctrine—and how far the view of the saints' cult which Timothy advanced in this letter recalls what we have already seen in Ishai's *On the Martyrs* will be readily observed. But it differed profoundly from that which was propounded, in the East Roman world, in favour of a view of the saints as powerful and percipient patrons of the living in heaven. Timothy's view of the soul sleep of the saints in anticipation of the Resurrection conflicted fundamentally with our Byzantine writers' representations of the saints' ongoing activity as benefactors and intercessors beyond the grave. Resolutely fixed upon the importance of the body and the Resurrection, however, Timothy was not inclined to recalibrate East Syrian eschatology for the sake of the cult of the saints. A further result of this was that the interim period which so preoccupied a number of Byzantine thinkers during the sixth and seventh centuries—whether in respect of *post-mortem* purgatorial fire or testing at demonic tollgates—attracted much less urgency in the eschatological outlook of the Church of the East. As we shall see, a strong view of the soul's posthumous inactivity encouraged Timothy to develop a distinctive East Syrian perspective on the purpose of prayer for the dead.

The Eucharistic commemoration of the dead existed in the medieval liturgies of the Church of the East, as it did in both the Latin and Greek traditions.[268] Yet we have seen that the attempt to downplay, in late sixth-century Rome and Constantinople, the ongoing activity of the souls of the saints *post mortem* was perceived as an implicit attack on the assistance which the church purported to provide for the faithful deceased more generally, especially through the prayers and offerings made on their behalf in the liturgy. This nexus between the saints' cult and the care of the dead was also sensed east of the

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honorem non sentiunt, nos autem corpora servorum Dei spernere et contemnere. My italics.

[268] For the East Syrian office of the dead, see Anonymi Auctoris, *Expositio officiorum ecclesiae (Georgio arbelensi vulgo adscripta)*, R. H. Connolly (ed.), CSCO, series secunda, vol. 91 (Paris, 1915), pp. 123–5: *Quare defunctis post mortem praecipuum deferimus honorem, precibusque eos honoramus, atque ad sepulchrum deducimus, cum tamen finis eorum sit corrputio?* The text, which is uncertainly ascribed to Giwargis (George), Metropolitan of Arbela and Mosul († 987), is a collection of Questions and Answers on the liturgy.

Euphrates. Indeed, Timothy's exposition, in his letter to Boktisho, of the nature of the soul and the afterlife concluded, like Gregory's fourth dialogue, with an attempt to reconcile eschatological doctrine with ritual practice in a coherent account of man's condition in this world and the next. This striving towards such a synthesis consequently emerges as characteristic of early medieval Christianity between Rome and Baghdad.

Boktisho's final question resembled that which Eustratius considered at Constantinople in his rebuttal of the notion of psychological inactivity *post mortem*: 'it is asked by some whether souls obtain any benefit from oblations, and the remembrance of them in prayers'.[269] Clearly, eighth-century East Syrian Christians like Boktisho could perceive as much as Eustratius had the problem which the posthumous inactivity of the soul presented for the church's role in the care of the dead. In response, Timothy developed quite a different view of the operation of the commemoration of the dead. Like Eustratius before him, Timothy justified the church's recourse to the power of the Mass as an aid to the deceased, referring as he did to the offering of sacrifices on behalf of the dead in 2 Maccabees. As Timothy reasoned, if the sacrifices of the Old Testament were effective, then the sacrifice of Christ in the Eucharist must be all the more so.[270] Crucially, however, Timothy also stipulated that the benefits which the Eucharist and the prayers of the living conferred on the deceased accrued to the soul only at the moment of the Resurrection. 'The sacrifice of the Son of God is beneficial in all things when it is offered', he affirmed, 'but, the fruit of such a sacrifice is not made known to the soul and the body at this time, but after the resurrection of the dead'.[271] Of course, this differed drastically from Gregory the Great's portrayal of the power of the Mass to bring about the immediate, not to say instantaneous, comfort and relief of the faithful, and not only in the next life. For Gregory, of course, and the Greek writers who shared his view, the immediate comfort that the offering of the

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[269] Eustratius of Constantinople, *Stat. anim.* = CCG 60:2342–5: *ἔστι δὲ τοῦτο ζητητέον παρά τισιν, εἰ ἄρα ὠφελοῦνται διὰ τῶν προσφορῶν αἱ ψυχαί, καὶ τοῦ μνημονεύσθαι αὐτὰς ἐν ταῖς εὐχαῖς*. See the second chapter of this book.

[270] See Timothy I, *Ep*. 2, Braun (ed.), CSCO 74–5, SS, 2nd ser., vol. 67, I, 35–6.

[271] Timothy I, *Ep*. 2, Braun (ed.), CSCO 74–5, SS, 2nd ser., vol. 67, I, 36: *In omnibus ergo prodest sacrificium Filii Dei cum offertur – fructus autem talis sacrificii non hoc tempore animae et corpori innotescit, sed post resurrectionem mortuorum cognoscetur.*

Mass and other prayers bestowed on the souls of the departed was a natural consequence of their strong understanding of the ongoing activity of the disembodied human soul after death. As Eustratius affirmed at Constantinople, the deceased 'have not been transported to death, but from death to divine life!'[272] But, although Timothy and the East Syrians writers who preceded him, did not dispute the soul's vitality beyond the grave, its substantial inertia, whether in Paradise or outside, before the Resurrection, seems radically to have diminished the urgency of that assistance which the liturgical care of the dead offered the souls of the departed. After all, if, as Timothy earlier advised Boktisho, disembodied souls were not punished in their pre-Resurrection confinement outside the gates of Paradise, from what did the souls of the departed require relief? Again, the fundamental insight of the East Syrian tradition to which Timothy gave mature expression here was that, apart from the body, the soul was not able to suffer, a fact which made the benefits that may have derived from any acts of relief performed on its behalf by the living redundant at least until its reunion with the body. 'Then', Timothy affirmed in reference to the Resurrection, 'when the extent of our sins is openly revealed, so also the extent of the grace of forgiveness that flows from the sacrifice of the Son of God who is given for us, will be made known.'[273]

This picture of the benefits of the church's liturgy of the dead deferred until the Resurrection justifies a solution offered earlier in this chapter to a further ostensible aporia in the East Syrian cult of the saints. Ephrem, as we have seen, minimized the activity of the disembodied human soul, but nevertheless expressed, at a number of points in his *Hymns on Paradise*, his hope in the prayers and intercessions of the saints beyond the grave. This hope, it was suggested, should properly be understood as a desire to benefit from the prayers of the saints, not so much in the 'here and now' of Ephrem's life here below, but on the day of judgement that followed the Resurrection, when uniquely the saints' reunited souls and bodies would be able to offer them. Of course, this deferral until the Resurrection of the saints' role as patrons of the living contrasts sharply with the perception of the saints' present immanence found so widely in representations of the saints' miracles in early Byzantium. Yet it would seem to be justified not only in the light of Timothy's teaching on the nature of the East Syrian office of the dead, but also, implicitly, in the almost total absence of reference to the saints' role as present intercessors before God on behalf of the living in Ishai's *On the Martyrs*. Only at the end of this treatise, it was observed, did the doctor of Seleucia express any hope in the prayers of the saints. Crucially, it, too, was in the context of the final judgement that followed upon the Resurrection. We may conclude, therefore, that it was not that the Church of the East did not conceive of a patronal role for the saints on behalf of the faithul, but that, consistent with the wider geography of the East Syrian afterlife and especially the elevated significance it accorded to a view of man as an organic union of body and soul, the church of the East largely deferred that role to an eschatological future.[274]

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[272] Eustratius of Constantinople, *Stat. anim.* = CCG 60:2478: *Οὐ γὰρ εἰς νεκρῶν, ἀλλ' εἰς ἔνθεον ζωὴν ἐκ θανά του μετεφοιτήθησαν.*

[273] Timothy I, *Ep.* 2, Braun (ed.), CSCO 74–5, SS, 2nd ser., vol. 67, I, 36: *Tunc, quando mensura peccatorum aperte cognoscetur, etiam mensura caritatis in remissione ex sacrificio Filii Dei, qui pro nobis datus est, cognoscetur.*

CONCLUSION

In his letter to the querulous Christians of Basra, Catholicos Timothy urged that the relics of the saints should truly be seen as 'temples of God to be embraced and kissed'. But, he immediately qualified, 'we do not say these things so that the saints' bodies should be worshiped with God or as God [. . .], but rather that [their bodies] should be honoured as belonging to the servants and friends of God'.[275] He then provided authority for relic veneration from the Bible, the fathers, and the councils of the church.[276] Clearly, the potential idolatrousness of the cult of the saints was no less readily perceived in eighth-century Iraq than it had been in late sixth-century Rome and

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[274] Of course, this still leaves unexplained the reference in Narsai's memra *On the Martyrs* to the prayers of the saints as a superior form of urban defence than the city walls themselves, for surely that was one of the saints' posthumous benefactions that could not be deferred until the final judgement.

[275] Timothy I, *Ep*. 36, Braun (ed.), CSCO 74–5, SS, 2nd ser., vol. 67, I, 182: *Hoc non dicimus, ut corpora sanctorum cum Deo et sicut Deus adorentur [. . .] sed ut horentur tamquam domesticorum et amicorum Dei.*

[276] Namely, these were Luke 20.38, Gregory of Nazianzus (*c*. 330–90) and canons twenty of the Council of Gangra (325–81?) and sixty-three of Nicaea (325): Timothy I, *Ep*. 36, Braun (ed.), CSCO 74–5, SS, 2nd ser., vol. 67, I, 182–3.

Constantinople. On the contrary, the presence of the East Syrian Christian community in the Islamic empire of the Abbasid caliphs potentially made the honours which the church rendered unto the bodily remains of its sainted heroes even more problematic. Indeed, from the second half of the eighth century, Muslim criticisms of the Christian cult of the saints became more and more vocal.[277] But even earlier, in the Zoroastrian-dominated empire of the Sasanian king of kings, the Christian cult of the dead could be viewed with suspicion, whether by the magi who viewed with distaste the handling of the bodily remains of the deceased or by the Babylonian rabbis who knew at least as well as the Christians themselves the jealousy of the One God of the Hebrew scriptures.[278] Certainly, in the mid-sixth century, the potential criticisms of either of these groups could account for Ishai's apology for the honours which his community paid to the saints at Seleucia-Ctesiphon, as those of the Muslim Arabs may have in Timothy's Iraq.

But while, doubtless, a particular, local setting stood behind every attempt either to defend or to rationalize the Christian cult of the saints which we have reviewed in this chapter and in this wider study, there is enough common ground thematically between each of these apologies for us to posit the existence of a common historical background behind them all. That is to say, however conventionally late antiquity is presented as an 'age of saints', the status of that cult and its propriety as an authentic expression of Christian monotheism was clearly contested and disputed. Certainly, both in the Roman empire and 'east of the Euphrates', that cult seems to have attained a new level of extravagance, material and rhetorical, over the course of the sixth century, even if some aspects of early Byzantine and contemporary Persian representations of the nature of the saints' activity beyond the grave remained significantly different.[279] Why this was so, at least in the East Roman world, will be sketched out below. But it cannot be doubted that some Christians questioned, and perhaps resisted, the heady mix of miracles, pilgrimage, and episcopal and secular patronage that their fellow believers lavished on the saints in the context of an increasingly elaborate cultic apparatus. The historical significance of these hesitations should not be dismissed. For along the long and porous frontier that joined both Sasanian Persia and Rome's Near Eastern provinces to the Syrian desert others may have been watching who, with perhaps growing dismay at what they saw, converted their indignation into the most radical impulse for religious reform witnessed in late antiquity since the rise of Christianity itself.

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[277] Griffith (2008) 36–7, 142–7. See also Suermann (2000).

[278] For Zoroastrian responses to the Christian saints' cult, see Bruns (2006). But note the cautionary comments of Payne (2011) 93–5. On the Jewish community in Sasanian Persia, see Morony (1984) 306–31.

[279] In this sense, the evidence from early Syriac and later East Syrian provides a counterpoint to the more familiar Latin and Greek traditions and consequently relativizes their claims to normativity. East Syrian Christianity is crucial for correcting the traditional portrayal of Church history as a dichotomous narrative of estrangement between Greek 'East' and Latin 'West': Kaweru (1962); Brock (2005) 19: 'The Syriac Orient needs to be regarded, not just as a curiosity, [. . .] an optional extra on the fringe of the Greek East and Latin West, but rather [. . .] as an integral part of the Church's historical structure'.

Conclusion

Debating the saints' cult in the age of Gregory the Great and Muhammad

In 596, according to the *Chronicle of Se'ert*, Sabrisho (596–604), a Christian hermit-turned-bishop of great sanctity, was installed by Khusro II (590–628), King of Kings, as head and catholicos of the dyophysite Christian community of Persia.[1] Christians in the Sasanian capital at Ctesiphon greeted the news of his election with wild enthusiasm. Reports of Sabrisho's miracles soon travelled west of the Euphrates, where they were received with great interest by the Emperor Maurice (582–602). The emperor immediately despatched the imperial portrait artist to the court of Khusro at Ctesiphon, charged with faithfully reproducing an image of the living holy man. Unwilling, like his contemporary Theodore of Sykeon, to have his portrait taken in this way, Sabrisho eventually relented and the image was made. Upon his return to Constantinople, the artist called together those (presumably Persian Christians) resident in the imperial capital who knew Sabrisho, but were unaware of the mission with which the emperor had charged the artist. 'Whose likeness does this image display?', he asked them, showing them the picture. 'It is Sabrisho', they replied, 'patriarch of the Persian empire. It is truly him in person.' Not content with the image, the emperor, a great collector of saintly relics, entreated the catholicos to send to him at Constantinople the head cap he was accustomed to wear. When the imperial messenger returned home with it, '[t]he emperor kissed the catholicos's head cap, and his family and the inhabitants of his empire did likewise. Then Maurice placed the cap in the treasury with the other relics of the saints.'

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[1] The deeds of Sabrisho can be found in the *Chronicle of Se'ert*, A. Scher and R. Griveau (ed. and trans.), PO 13 (Paris, 1919), 487–98. I thank Philip Wood for drawing this story to my attention. On Sabrisho, see Tamcke (1988).

This report and others like it confirm the prominence of the saints' cult at the imperial court at the end of the sixth century. This period has usually been noted for Christianity's intensified permeation of the imaginative and symbolic landscape of East Roman society.[2] From the reign of the great Justinian (527–65) the destiny of the empire generally, and the authority of the imperial office specifically, came to be identified with the legitimizing ideology of Christian Providence.[3] The empire was seen to be, as a number of contemporary writers claim, uniquely 'God-guarded' (*θεοφυλάκτος*).[4] The last decades of the sixth century, in particular, seem to have witnessed a concerted effort by the imperial government to tie its legitimacy and prestige to saints' and relic cults.[5] This process led to the increasing incorporation of numerous objects of Christian cult and piety (including icons and saints' relics) into imperial ceremonial.[6] The reign of Emperor Maurice—the period when Eustratius was writing—has been singled out for special attention. Not only did Maurice play a prominent role in promoting the cult of the Virgin Mary (notably by instituting the feast of the Virgin's Assumption on 15 August).[7] He was also a conspicuous patron of numerous saints, attempting to acquire, for veneration at Constantinople, the bodies of St Demetrius from Thessalonica and St Daniel the Prophet from the Sasanian city of Susa, while the Empress Constantina sought to obtain St Paul's head from Rome.[8] Living saints were also courted, as we have seen.

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[2] See above all the seminal articles by Cameron (1976), (1978) and (1979); also Haldon (1997*b*) 37–40, 355–63 who calls it a period of 'ideological reorientation'.

[3] Evans (1996) 58–65, 252. See also Moorhead (1994) 116–20 and Magdalino (1993) 12–13.

[4] Cameron (1979*b*) 23.

[5] Cameron (1979*b*) 18–24. See also Haldon (1997*a*) esp. 43–4.

[6] Cameron (1979*b*) 6–15; eadem (1978) 98: '[. . .] the rise of icons is concomitant with an increase in the veneration of relics, and [. . .] both have their place in Marian devotion'. For the Christianization of imperial ceremonial in the sixth century, see also MacCormack (1981) 240–59; and Dagron (1996) 74–105.

[7] On the Virgin's Assumption, see Cameron (1978) 86–7; and Daley (2001) esp. 80–1.

[8] The evidence is collected by Whitby (1988) 22–3, although he neglects St Paul's head. For the latter, see Gregory the Great, *ep*. 4.30 in D. Norberg (ed.) CCSL 140 (Turnhout, 1981), 248–50, with discussion in McCulloh (1976). For the problems related to Demetrius's relics at Thessalonica (they could not be found), see Cormack (1985) 64–5.

In 590 Golinduch, the 'living martyr' of Persia, fortuitously appeared on the empire's Mesopotamian frontier in the train of the refugee Khusro II.[9] Acclaimed as a saint, Golinduch was promptly invited to bless the government at Constantinople, but died before she could make the journey. Later in the same decade, St Theodore of Sykeon, the bishop of a small town in Galatia who had earned a measure of fame through his dedicated asceticism, was similarly invited and, according to his biographer, fêted in the capital by the emperor, patriarch, and other government officials.[10] Maurice's engagement with Sabrisho should be seen as a continuation of the same behaviour.

Maurice's reign saw other developments as well. The Persian, Avar, Slav, and Lombard incursions that bore upon the empire across several fronts in this period are well known.[11] Just as significantly, the repeated mutinies that broke out in the imperial army over paycuts during Maurice's reign reflected the serious problems that existed in the collection of fiscal revenues throughout the second half of the sixth century, a result of systemic corruption, plague, and invasion.[12] Indeed, it seems likely that, as pressure mounted upon the government, Maurice and his entourage sought to bolster the authority of imperial rule by assembling an unprecedented array of saintly and other relics in the capital, both in order to enlist the saints' prayers in aid of the government's stability and in order to discourage (ultimately in vain) political revolution by enhancing the sacredness of the emperor's authority through his manipulation of these cult objects.[13] Emphasizing the role of icon and relic cults in legitimizing imperial authority at this time, Averil Cameron argued that 'the late sixth century was crucial. It was a time when the Byzantine emperors in the capital presided over a process of cultural integration by which the élite and its ruler came to be fully identified. In this society such integration could only be expressed in religious terms.'[14] Yet inasmuch as this 'integration' signified the elaboration of a more specifically Christian image and rationale for the authority of the imperial office, this arguably reflected the weakness rather than the strength of the emperor's position.[15] For the strains and often devastating setbacks which the empire faced in this period cannot have failed to undermine the inherited Justinianic rhetoric of God's special appointment and protection of the Christian empire, its emperor, and inhabitants, especially as these were thought to be expressed through the ministrations of his saints.[16] Indeed, during the straitened conditions of the 580s and 590s, claims regarding the empire's providential role in history may actually have been made all the more hollow by the contrast between reality as perceived and the rhetoric itself.

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[9] Decapitated in Persia under Hormizd IV (579–90), Golinduch allegedly had her head returned to her body and was herself restored to life by an angel. Her story is recorded in numerous sources from the sixth and seventh centuries. See Peeters (1944) and Garitte (1956), and now Dal Santo (2011*b*).

[10] *Theo*. 82 in Festugière (ed.), *Vie*, 69. See also *Theo*. 97 where Theodore heals one of Maurice's children from an illness, before dining with the imperial family.

[11] See esp. Whitby (1988) 11–13 and 24 (on disturbances in Egypt); and Haldon (1997*b*) 31–7; but cf. Whittow (1996) 47–53.

[12] Sarris (2006) 228–34.

[13] See Dal Santo (2011*b*) 144–5.

Like the other Greek and Latin texts we have reviewed in this study, Eustratius's *On the State of Souls after Death* is important because it focuses attention on a remarkable degree of scepticism, even hostility, towards the saints' cult at Constantinople at this time. This study has sought to demonstrate that the rationalistic critique of the saints' miracles that Eustratius rebutted reflected a more generalized anxiety about the saints and their miracles in early Byzantine society at the end of the sixth century. Dissent towards the saints' cult is almost symptomatic of the hagiographical sources written between Justin II's reign and the Persian and Arab conquests of the seventh century. This is not to dispute the striking proliferation of miracle collections at Constantinople and elsewhere at the turn of the sixth and seventh centuries.[17] These collections have often been taken as a reflection of the cultural integration of Byzantine society around the saints as powerful symbols of the divine protection upon which its citizens had come to believe the empire relied. But, as we have seen, these collections devoted as much attention to heading off the anticipated criticisms of sceptics. In the light also of Eustratius's apology, it is an open question just how universal belief in trumpeted religious phenomena like the saints' cult actually was in late sixth-century Byzantium. Is it possible that, during a period of more or less sustained crisis for the Christian empire, the rationalist critique of the saints' cult, and the wider anxiety it reflected, points to the existence of a dissenting current in the face of the broader stream of imperial ideology and public political culture?

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[14] Cameron (1979*b*) 4.

[15] Haldon (1997*b*) 38–9, who writes that the change 'served also to point out the frailty of earthly power and to direct attention away from God's representative upon earth to God himself.' Compare Baynes (1955) 249: 'The conviction that the city of Constantine was God-guarded [. . .] must surely have had profound psychological significance'.

[16] On the ideological challenge presented by repeated outbreaks of the plague, see Kaldellis (2007).

[17] See for example Cameron (1991*a*) 210–12; Haldon (1997*b*) 39.

In many ways, the later sixth- and seventh-century debate on the saints presents the historian with a debate on intercession—whether and how it was possible, under what conditions, and for what purposes. If Eustratius was forced to defend the foundations of the saints' posthumous intercessory role, it is equally true that the controversy concerned more than merely the authenticity of the saints' miracles and apparitions. Also at stake, as we have seen, was the condition after death of the souls of the 'ordinary faithful' and the efficacy of the church's Eucharistic offerings on their behalf. Gregory the Great's *Dialogues*, which date from 593–4 at Rome, are closely involved with the nature of the saints' miracles and activity *post mortem*. Like Eustratius at Constantinople, moreover, Gregory perceived that any attack on the anthropology of the saints' cult implicitly undermined the foundations of the church's ritual care of the dead, an institution that embodied, perhaps even more than the saints themselves, the awesome mediatory role between the natural and supernatural worlds which East Roman emperors and their advisors increasingly wished to tap directly. Thus, there emerges an important intersection of vested interests in the saints' cult: the anthropology on which it rested underlay the claims of the imperial church to act as a mediator between God and human society, both in this life and the next through its priestly and sacramental structures—and at the head of the church increasingly stood the emperor.

The early Byzantine debate about the saints thus carried wider implications, not only for the imperial church, but also the empire itself. As we have seen, by the time Eustratius composed his apology in the 590s, saints' cults were an acknowledged, and increasingly important, prop for the imperial government's presentation of the empire's God-guarded (*θεοφυλάκτος*) status.[18] The policies pursued by Justin II (565–78), Tiberius (578–82), and Maurice (582–602) in this regard built on the political and ideological value which the saints' cults acquired during the reign of Justinian (527–65). Since '[t]he reorientation of this period appears most clearly in the official stress upon the heavenly guardians of the emperor and the state', it has been argued that as a patron of these cults, the emperor was claiming for himself a mediatory position between God and the empire.[19] What is crucial, however, is that contemporaries contested this idea of saintly intercession and along with it the empire's and the emperor's special place in God's attention by implication.

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[18] Cameron (1976) 65–7, (1979*b*) 15–18.

It is worth pausing over the question of intercession. Commenting on this period, Averil Cameron has observed that '[i]ntercession [. . .] leads us to deeper conclusions about Byzantium in the late sixth century, in which [. . .] religion is perhaps as much a symptom and a social mechanism as a reality in itself'.[20] A story from Gregroy the Great's *Dialogues* reflects, however, how problematic this notion of intercession could be. When Gregory related that an Italian monk had been able to hasten his departure for the next life through ardent supplication of a deceased holy man, Gregory's audience challenged this by arguing that such a version of events was incompatible with Augustine's doctrine of pre-destination.[21] How could the intercessions of the saints alter God's pre-destined plans? To allay their fears, Gregory cited the example of Isaac who prayed to God on account of the fact that Rebecca was barren, notwithstanding God's promise of Abraham's many descendents (Gen. 25.21). In Gregory's account, it was Isaac's prayers that brought God's predetermined plans to fruition; there was no underlying conflict between saintly intercession and the notion of pre-destination. Despite Roman anxieties, in other words, Gregory asserted that there was no contradiction between the Latin church's Augustinianism and the intercessory prerogatives claimed for the saints. Indeed, no less than for Maurice at Constantinople did the harnessing of the power of the saints from beyond the grave form an integral part of Gregory's own diplomacy, as the flasks of oil collected from the shrines of more than sixty different saints, including those of Peter and Paul, at Rome and sent to Theodolinda, queen of the Lombards, attest.[22] Filings from the chains of St Peter were equally among the pope's most precious gifts.

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[19] The citation is from Haldon (1997*b*) 38.

[20] Cameron (1978) 106. See also Haldon (1997*b*) 38.

[21] Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 1.8.4 (SC 260:72–4).

Posthumous intercession, the act by which heavenly benefactors secured the protection of the living, was thus always more than an issue of abstruse theology, disconnected from the business of governing the empire.[23] The condemnation of the 'Three Chapters' at the Second Council of Constantinople in 553, through which Justinian intended to restore his empire's divided Christian sects to unity, relied upon the *post-mortem* activity of souls and the church's power to condemn the deceased, above all Theodore of Mopsuestia.[24] As we have seen, Eutychius of Constantinople, Eustratius's patron, was the very architect of the theology that enabled this policy of Justinian's.[25] It rested upon a strong assertion of the church's power 'to bind and loose' (Matt 16.19) beyond the grave, a prominent notion in both Eustratius and Gregory the Great's portrayals of the saints' powers.[26] In this way, the divisive controversy over the 'Three Chapters' can be seen as part of the political background to the disputed ability of the living to intervene in the world of the dead and *vice versa*. Indeed, it has been said that for political reasons, as much as theological ones, 'neither the church's friends nor her enemies could ever be allowed to perish completely'.[27] Justinian seems to have reasoned that the reconciliation of the miaphysite churches was too politically significant to be thwarted by scruples over a minor theological point, but the anthropology which the anathematization of Theodore required had been scarcely discussed when the council ended.[28] It was worked out only as the century wore on, revealing not only the church's, but also the empire's vested interest in a vigorous afterlife for the human soul between God's throne room and its footstool in the imperial palace on the Bosphorus.[29] By the time of Constantinople's deliverance from the Avars in 626, the fate of the empire itself was believed to hang upon heavenly intercessors, the mythology of the Virgin's miraculous intervention assuming a primary place in the empire's official memory.[30] But as early as 533 some had sought to justify Justinian's decision to invade Vandal Africa on the grounds that St Laetus, an African martyr, had appeared to him in a dream and guaranteed the Roman success.[31]

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[22] See Leyser (2000*b*) 298–9 and 303: 'Theodelinda's husband presented a constant threat of violence to Gregory's Italy [. . .]. He had no choice but to assemble the martyrs: they were the only forces he had.'

[23] Cameron (1978) 99.

[24] For the canons, see Tanner (1990) 109–10.

[25] Cameron (1988) 228–9; also Allen (1981) 203.

[26] Eustratius of Constantinople, *Vita Eutychii Patriarchae Constantinopolitani* = CCG 25:1644–7; Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 2.23.6 (SC 260:208–10).

[27] Constas (2002) 282.

[28] On the council, see Price (2009), I, 1–108; also Meyendorff (1968).

[29] For the vigorous debate about the rights of the church over the souls of the deceased, see Price (2009) I, 178–81; Maas (2003) 51–2, 58–60.

Yet the scepticism towards the saints' cult frequently revealed by texts from, or connected to, the later decades of the sixth century troubles the prevailing image in the historiography of a uniformly believing society. The reality was evidently more complex. Criticism of the saints' cult seems to point to the survival of a rationalist tradition capable of questioning the manipulation of Christian symbols and cult objects by the imperial government for political ends. As we have noted, Nicholas Constas has postulated a connection between the arguments Eustratius opposed and the Aristotelian Tritheist, Stephen Gobar, who was probably active in Constantinople during the 570s.[32] Perhaps a disciple, as we have seen, of the great John Philoponus (*c.* 490–575), Gobar's querying of the logical foundation for the church's care of the dead resonates with the defence of this practice found in Eustratius's treatise.[33] Indeed, Gobar also raised problems regarding the date assigned to the celebration of the Virgin's Annunciation.[34] In a historical context where the cult of the Virgin was being steadily drawn into imperial ceremonial as the capital's special protectress, Gobar's adverting to such discrepancies in the liturgical calendar account surely had subversive potential.

Recent scholarship on the late sixth-century empire reveals a highly stratified society riven by religious, economic, and political tensions.[35] That the imperial government had ever greater recourse to religious symbolism to overcome these tensions should not be doubted. What is open to question, however, is the extent to which the later sixth- and seventh-century emperors achieved a cultural or political consensus around the cults of the saints, Virgin, and True Cross. Indeed, the rallying of the empire's elite around such vaunted heavenly patrons seems to have been already questioned under Justinian. In his published works as much as his controversial *Secret History*, Procopius of Caesarea sharply criticized Justinian's unbridled ambition, and his ambivalence towards the emperor's religious policies was equally clear.[36] The emperor's duty to submit to the law was taken up again at the end of Justinian's reign by the anonymous author of a treatise *On Political Science*.[37] In his *De opificio mundi*, Philiponus rejected both the notion of the emperor as God's image on earth and the divine sanctions frequently adduced in support of imperial authority, arguing instead that 'government among men is a work not of nature, but of men's free will.'[38] Gobar and the sceptics whom Eustratius rebutted could be thought of as the representatives of this elite secular tradition under Justin II, Tiberius II, and Maurice, even if their arguments rested on theology and anthropology, rather than political philosophy. For, by boldly undermining the logical foundations of an aspect of Christian piety—the saints' cult—with which the emperor was increasingly identifying his own and the empire's survival, the rationalist arguments of Gobar and others implicitly undermined the foundation of an imperial autocracy decked with the trappings of Christian cult.

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[30] Cameron (1978) 101–2.

[31] Evans (1996) 127.

[32] Harnack (1923); Bardy (1947) and (1949).

[33] Constas (2002) 280–1. For an upbeat assessment of contemporary intellectual culture, see Wildberg (2005).

[34] Stephen Gobar §3 = Photius, *Bibliotheca*, cod. 232 in Harnack (1923) 207. Gobar opined that this took place both in April and March. The result was that Christ's birth could be assigned both to 6th January and 25th December. For the background, see van Esbroeck (1968).

[35] Sarris (2006) 228–34.

To repeat, it was in the nature of the emperors' increasingly public manipulation of intercessory cults to exalt the imperial office above secular constraint or accountability to the law. Indeed, if we take into account Theophylact's account of Maurice's actions at St Euphemia's shrine, then the debate surrounding the saints' cult was taken seriously enough for the emperor himself to intervene. But despite Maurice's vindication of Euphemia's miracles, the authority of saint and relic cults remained under a question mark into the seventh century. Inasmuch, therefore, as contemporaries questioned the logical foundation of these intercessory cults, they simultaneously challenged the emperors' exalted politico-religious claims. The intended effect may have to open up a 'secular' space where the relationship between the government and those it governed could be reconceived outside the terms of Christian autocracy.[39] The result is that the prominence from the reign of Justin II of religious symbols in expressions of imperial ideology point not to the successful integration of early Byzantine society, but to its increasingly fractious state. For even with its heavenly benefactors the God-guarded empire was never as secure as it seemed. Those benefactors themselves were alarmingly vulnerable. When the eastern field army rioted over pay at Edessa in 588, Maurice attempted to overawe the unruly soldiers through a demonstration of the sacredness of imperial authority, ordering the priests to display an image of Christ 'not made by human hands' to the troops. It was promptly stoned. The unpacified soldiers then proceeded to destroy the emperor's own images.[40] This event among others points to the failed manipulation of religious symbolism by Justinian's successors to paper over increasingly severe social tensions in the Eastern Empire at the end of the sixth century.[41]

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[36] Kaldellis (2004) 165–221.

[37] On this text see O'Meara (2003) 180–2; and Cameron (2009) 15–36 at 29–32. I thank Prof. Cameron for very kindly providing me with a copy of her article.

[38] Dvornik (1966), II, 711–12. The text dates from 547–60 (and possibly 557–60): see MacCoull (2006).

Positioning a cult of Christian saints near the centre of imperial ideology may only have exacerbated those tensions by further alienating those parts of late sixth-century East Roman society that could not, or would not, subscribe. Rationalists seem to have voiced their objections, and others did likewise, including the empire's Jews, albeit on different grounds. Between 608 and 640, when first Persian and then Arab onslaughts threatened the survival of the Christian empire of East Rome, Bishop Leontius of Neapolis, whom we have already met as the author of the *Life of John the Almsgiver*, composed a dialogue known to posterity as his *Apology against the Jews*.[42] The authenticity of a seventh-century date for this text has been contested, and like other examples of contemporary Christian *adversus Judaeos* literature, it has been alleged that it was more a rhetorical exercise than a reflection of 'everyday social commerce between Christians and Jews'.[43] But Leontius's apology, like others of its kind, can be viewed as evidence for a Jewish critique of Christian 'idolatry' that was articulated with increasing boldness as the fortunes of the Christian empire declined.[44]

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[39] Cf. Haldon (1997*b*) 21.

[40] Theophylact of Simocatta, *History*, de Boor (ed.), 3.1.8–12 = *History*, Whitby and Whitby (eds.), 73–5. See Sarris (2006) 234.

[41] Sarris (2006) 221–2 and 234: 'Clearly, empty pockets made for bad Christians'.

[42] For the fragmentary Greek text and French translation, see Déroche (1994), with a detailed discussion of the surviving manuscripts. On the period between 610 and 640, see Haldon (1997*b*) 41–53; and Howard-Johnston (2010) 434–45, 464–70.

Among the Christian customs that Jews singled out was the cult of the saints.[45] The Christian reaction was shrill and defensive. To Leontius, the Jews wilfully ignored the manifold miracles that the saints daily lavished on those who approached them through their relics and images. 'Surely,' Leontius affirmed, 'the blindness of the Jews is great, and great is their impiety':

> They do violence to the truth and the thankless tongues of the Jews are an insult to God. The relics and images of the martyrs often chase away the demons – and these mischievous men slander these miracles with their insults and turn them to derision as they mock them! Tell me, how many manifestations of the presence of the saint (*ἐπισκιάσεις*), how many emissions of balm (*ἀναβλύσεις*), often even of blood, have been produced by the relics and images of the martyrs? Yet those who understand nothing in their hearts are not convinced by these spectacles and take them instead as so many myths and invented stories [. . .]. But tell me, how can we be idolaters, we who venerate and adore even the bones, the dust, and the rags, the blood and even the tombs of the martyrs because they did not sacrifice to the idols?[46]

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[43] On the text's authenticity, see Déroche (1994) 47 n. 13, with bibliography. On the 'literary construction of the Jew', see the interesting arguments of Olster (1994) 117, but compare the reply of Déroche (1997) and the sensible counsels of Cameron (2002) 68–9. Of course, there is no reason why these texts could not reflect both the rhetorical rationalization of Roman defeat *and* the real hostility of contemporary Jews. See further Hoyland (1997) 78–87, who sees a certain amount of this *adversus Judaeos* as actually addressed to early Muslims.

[44] Dagron and Déroche (1991) 24; also Barber (1997). For a subtle discussion of the complex relationship between 'Christians' and 'Jews' in late antiquity, see Boyarin (2004), esp. 202–25; and Haldon (1997*b*) 345–8 for the sixth- and seventh-century situation. Among the key dates are the fall of Jerusalem to the Persians in 614, Heraclius's attempted forced baptism of the empire's Jews *circa* 634, and the defeat of the imperial army at the hands of the Arabs at Yarmuk in 636, although exact years sometimes remain a source of dispute.

[45] How closely Leontius seems to have anticipated a number of the 'iconophile' arguments of the eighth century was appreciated at the Second Council of Nicaea in 787: Déroche (1994) 47.

[46] Déroche (1994) 68: *ἀληθῶς πολλὴ τῶν Ἰουδαίων ἡ τύφλωσις, πολλὴ ἡ ἀσέβεια. Ἀδικεῖται ὑπ᾽ αὐτῶν ἡ ἀλήθεια, Θεὸς ὑβρίζεται ὑπὸ γλώσσης ἀχαρίστων Ἰουδαίων. Εκ*

Like defenders of the saints' cult before him, Leontius strove to demonstrate that God approved of the Christians' zeal for their sainted benefactors. 'For the honour rendered unto his saints passes over to him', Leontius wrote. 'The image of God, therefore, is man who was made in his image, and all the more since the Holy Spirit has come to dwell in him. Thus, it is right that I honour and adore the image of the servants of God and that I glorify the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit. For he has said, "I shall live among them and walk at their side" (Lev 26.12).'[47] And again: 'He who honours the martyr honours God [. . .] and he who honours the apostle honours the one who sent him.'[48]

Their own synagogues recently 'cleansed' of comparable idolatries, these Jewish criticisms of the Christian saints' cult in early Byzantium deserve comparison with those we have already observed in this study.[49] For in addition to other longstanding factors, the hostility between Christians and Jews during this period of intense stress for the Christian empire can be seen as a consequence of the historical process which, if it did not itself bring about this debate about the saints and their miracles, certainly raised its stakes: the surrounding of the public life of the Roman emperor with Christian intercessory cults whose effect was to complete the 'Christianization of the imperial office, of imperial ceremonial and the imperial image', begun under Justinian.[50] The sacralization of imperial authority and the

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λειψάνων μαρτύρων καὶ εἰκόνων πολλάκις ἐλαύνονται δαίμονες, καὶ ταῦτα ἐνυβρίζοντες ἄνθρωποι μιαροὶ διαστρέφουσι καὶ διαπαίζουσι καὶ διαγελῶσι. Πόσαι, εἰπέ μοι, ἐπισκιάσεις, πόσαι ἀναβλύσεις, πολλάκις δὲ καὶ αἱμάτων ῥύσεις ἐξ εἰκόνων καὶ λειψάνων μαρτύρων γεγόνασι; Καὶ οἱ ἀσύνετοι τῇ καρδίᾳ ὁρῶντες οὐ πείθονται, ἀλλὰ μύθους ταῦτα καὶ λήρους λογίζονται [. . .]. *Εἰπέ μοι, πῶς ἐσμὲν εἰδωλολάτραι, οἱ καὶ αὐτὰ τὰ ὀστᾶ καὶ τὴν κόνιν καὶ τὰ ῥάκη καὶ τὸ αἷμα καὶ τὴν σωρὸν τῶν μαρτύρων προσκυνοῦντες καὶ τιμῶντες διὰ τὸ μὴ θῦσαι αὐτοὺς τοῖς εἰδώλοις;*

[47] Déroche (1994) 69: *Ἡ γὰρ εἰς τοὺς ἁγίους αὐτοῦ τιμὴ εἰς αὐτὸν ἀνατρέχει.* [. . .].*Εἰκὼν τοίνυν τοῦ Θεοῦ ἐστιν ὁ κατ᾽ εἰκόνα Θεοῦ γεγονὼς ἄνθρωπος, καὶ μάλιστα ἐκ Πνεύματος ἁγίου ἐνοίκησιν δεξάμενος. Δικαίως οὖν τὴν εἰκόνα τῶν τοῦ Θεοῦ δούλων τιμῶ καὶ προσκυνῶ καὶ τὸν οἶκον τοῦ ἁγίου Πνεύματος δοξάζω.*

[48] Déroche (1994) 70: *Ὁ γὰρ τιμῶν τὸν μάρτυρα τὸν Θεὸν τιμᾷ,* [. . .] *καὶ ὁ τὸν ἀπόστολον τιμῶν τὸν ἀποστείλαντα τιμᾷ.* Cf. Matt 10.40.

[49] See Barber (1997) for the destruction of images in Palestinian synagogues of the later sixth century.

[50] The quotations are from Haldon (1997*b*) 284 n. 5 and Sarris (2006) 207. The first imperial coronation held in a church was that of Phocas in 602. See further Dvornik (1966) II, 815–17; Dagron (1996) 312–13.

ideology of imperial rule, and the 'increasing exclusivism of Christian imperial society' were met with resistance by those this vision implicitly excluded.[51] Discredited by the disasters of the early seventh century, and with the ultimate Christian 'victory' over the Persians doing little to restore it, by the 630s and 640s the 'God-guarded' status of the empire, like the legitimacy of those heavenly intermediaries through whom it was secured, could no longer be taken for granted.[52]

Indeed, hardly a decade after the Virgin's victory over the Khagan, the eviction of Khusro's armies and the spectacular restoration of the True Cross to Jerusalem, a new political ideology was born at the intersection of the Near East's religious currents, one which, alarmingly for Byzantium, made the very rejection of *post-mortem* intercession and intercessors the cornerstone of its legitimacy. Thus, in words traditionally attributed to Muhammad: 'Pray if you will to those whom you deify besides Him. They cannot relieve your distress, nor can they change it. Those to whom they pray themselves seek to approach their Lord, vying with each other to be near Him.'[53] Although the origins of Islam and its Holy Book remain debated, it is difficult not to view this aspect of its emergence in the light of the debates about the saints' cult which we have observed across the Near East, from Byzantium to Sasanian Persia, and which, as we have argued here, reflected the flip-side of the increased ideological value placed on these cults, at least in Byzantium, from the end of the sixth century.[54] Strictly monotheistic in its outlook, among the Qur'an's most frequent refrains is the futility of any heavenly intercessors in addition to God, and their casting as egregious idolatry.[55] This has been traditionally interpreted as a repudiation of 'Arabian' idolatry. But, seeming to deny the high-flown rhetoric of the cult's late sixth- and early seventh-century defenders, some of early Islam's severest imprecations can be read as specifically directed against the Christian saints.

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[51] Barber identifies Justinian's attempt to regulate aspects of the liturgical life of the empire's Jewish community as an important impulse towards 'a fundamentalist reassertion of an aniconic Hebrew culture': Barber (1997) 1035.

[52] On the pyrrhic quality of Roman victory, see Whittow (1996) 80–1; but cf. Howard-Johnston (2010) 436–45. For the damage done to Christian prestige in Jewish eyes, see Hoyland (1997) 526–31, 538–41; also Haldon (1997*b*) 364–5.

[53] The Night Journey 17.52. Citations from the Qur'an are from N. J. Dawood, *The Koran* (London, 2003).

[54] For an introduction to scholarship on the origins of the Qur'an, see Robinson (2009) 210–18; and Motzki (2006).

[55] On the Qur'an and idolatry, see above all Hawting (1999); also Wansbrough (1978) 43–4.

> You people! Listen to this aphorism. Those whom you invoke besides God could never create a single fly though they combined their forces. And if they carried away a speck of dust from them, they could never retrieve it. Powerless is the supplicant, and powerless he whom he supplicates.[56] [. . .]
>
> To God alone is true worship due. As for those who choose other guardians besides Him, saying: 'We serve them only that they may bring us nearer to God', God himself will resolve their differences for them. God does not guide the untruthful disbeliever.[57] [. . .]

The precise significance of passages such as these is undoubtedly elusive, but their general meaning may be considered clear: to the strict monotheist, the Christian cult of the saints appeared idolatrous by positing authority in divine mediators other than God.[58]

> They [the Christians] make of their clerics and their monks, and of the Messiah, the son of Mary, Lords besides God; though they were ordered to serve one God only. There is no god but Him. Exalted be he above those they deify besides Him![59]
>
> Say: 'People of the Book, let us come to an agreement: that we will worship none but God, that we will associate none with Him and that none of us shall set up mortals as deities besides God.'[60]

Through maledictions of this kind, seventh-century Islam emerges as a critique of patristic Christianity as it had developed in the early Byzantine world, and particularly its ever-expanding range of venerated personalities, even if various strands of medieval Islam would later develop their own saints' cults.[61] More radical in their reforming zeal, the early Muslim 'Believers' did not perhaps so much invent as absorb and channel existing critiques of the cult of the saints, rationalist, Christian, and Jewish, that circulated between the two great empires of late antiquity, perhaps along those same routes that the period's pilgrims, and occasionally its emperors, themselves plied in hopeful expectation of a blessing.[62] Numerous surviving ex-votos suggest that they were not always disappointed.[63] Nevertheless, by the 690s and early 700s, as Byzantium teetered on the verge of a controversy about the saints' images, the Arab conquest of the Near East, now apparently permanent, must have whispered in the hearts of many that the saints' favours for the God-protected empire of Byzantium had ultimately been few indeed.

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[56] Pilgrimage 22.71.

[57] The Throngs 39.1.

[58] Hawting (1999) 20–44, who refutes the notion that Mecca's pagans were the target of the Qur'an's polemic against idolatry. On its polemics, see further McAuliffe (2006) 4, with bibliography.

[59] Repentance 9.31.

[60] The 'Imrans 3.64.

[61] On Christianity in the Arabian peninsula and emergent Islam, see Hoyland (2001) 146–50; also Paret (1968); and Cameron (1991*b*); and from a different perspective Crone and Cook (1977) 11. On Muslim saints' cults, see, for example, Meri (1999).

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[62] On early Muslim identity and the religious nature of the movement, see Donner (2002–3) and (2010) 68–74. For commercial contacts between Arabia and East Rome and Sasanian Persia, see now Crone (2007); and Howard-Johnston (2010) 445–8.

[63] On votives, see Vikan (1995). For the votive inscription which Khusro II erected in honour of St Sergius at the saint's shrine at Rusafa, see Key Fowden (1999) 137 and Whitby, *Evagrius*, 312–14. On the cult of Sergius among the Arabs, see Key Fowden (1999) 117–20.

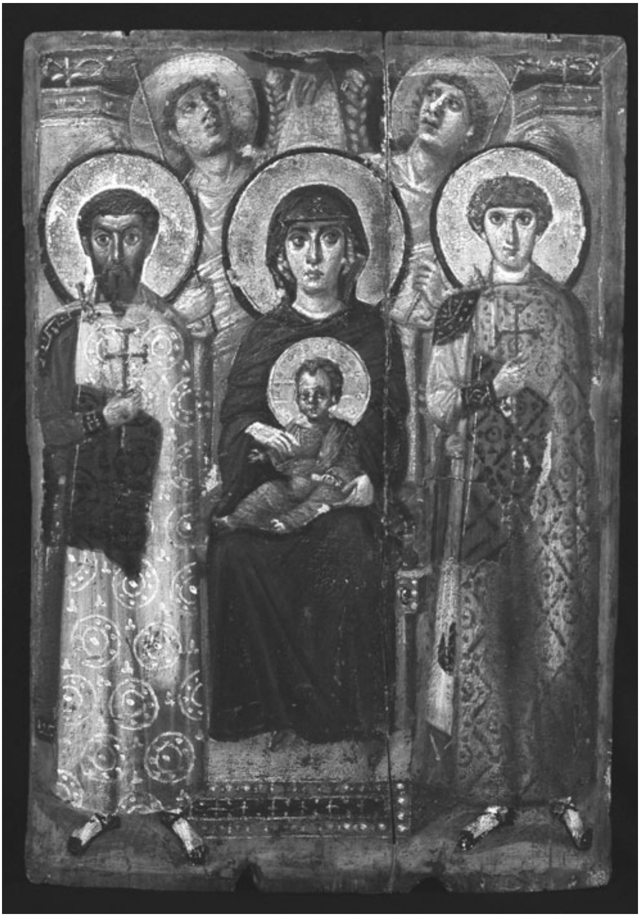

Fig. 8. St Catherine's Monastery, Mt Sinai. Sixth-century icon of the Virgin and Child.

Epilogue

Visualizing the God-guarded empire with the Sinai Icon of the Virgin and Child

In the Sacred Sacristy of the Monastery of St Catherine at Mount Sinai, the modern visitor is met with an arresting image of the Virgin Mary and infant Christ, painted with encaustic on a large wooden panel, measuring 68.5 cm in height and 49.7 cm in width.[1] The image is universally acknowledged to be one of the oldest painted wooden icons that survive. Believed to have been painted at Constantinople during the sixth century, the icon depicts the infant Christ, clothed in golden swaddling and seated on his mother's lap; indeed, the Child is almost swallowed up in the dark purple drapery of the Virgin's robes. With the Virgin herself seated upon a golden throne studded with jewels, the Mother of God and her holy offspring are dramatically flanked by two saints who are usually taken to represent St Theodore (to the Virgin's right) and St George (to her left), although the latter figure has sometimes been identified as St Demetrius.[2] Behind this protective 'phalanx' of saintly guardians, two angels fill the upper rear of the composition, rendered in *grisaille* with a Hellenistic naturalism that has caught the attention of a succession of modern critics.[3] The angels' eyes are turned fearfully towards heaven from where the hand of God extends down in the direction of the spectacular halo that encompasses the Virgin's head. With this halo effectively framing her face, the viewer is further captivated by the intriguing, not to say somewhat disconcerting, way in which the countenance of the Mother of God has been executed. Her white cheeks seem flush with a pink rouge perhaps more commonly associated with the face of a courtesan than that of the Mother of God and her lips are likewise pink and fleshy. The Virgin's eyes, emphasized by their startlingly unequal size, darkly shaded brows and the elongated nose, direct their gaze beyond the right shoulder of the viewer to an area of the heavenly throne room not represented in the image.[4] The Child's gaze follows his Mother's. With those of the angels lifted heavenwards, the eyes of the saints alone directly engage the viewer. It will be argued here that the iconographical scheme presented in the Sinai icon is a visual expression of the ideology of the 'God-guarded empire', a community sustained and protected through the intercession of heavenly patrons, which came to stand, it seems, as the foundation stone of the empire's official vision of itself under Justinian and his successors, a visualization of the heavenly benefactors standing watch on the Christian empire's behalf that has not been noted in previous analyses of the image.

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[1] See Fig. 8. For a colour image of the icon see Weitzmann (1976) plate IV, with a description at 18–22. See also Cormack (2000) 262–3. A grant from Trinity College, Cambridge, enabled the current author to view the icon *in situ* during the autumn of 2010.

[2] Weitzmann (1976) 20; Cormack (2000). It will be recalled that the same St Theodore appeared in an apparition recorded in one of Sophronius of Jerusalem's *Miracles of Cyrus and John*. The acclaimed patron of Thessalonica, St Demetrius needs no further introduction than that found in Chapter Three of this book.

[3] See esp. the discussion in Weitzmann (1976) 21.

Along with the skilful use of encaustic that lends an almost transparent quality to the flesh of the angels' faces, the fresh plasticity of both the Virgin's expression and the unconventionality of the arrangement as a whole confirm the image's early date.[5] There is also a degree of imperial ecumenism about the subject. Quite unlike any other representation of the Virgin and Child preserved in later medieval art, whether in east or west, the composition of the Sinai icon finds its nearest contemporary analogue in a sixth-century fresco to be found, still *in situ*, in the catacombs of Commodilla at Rome.[6] As in the Sinai icon, the seated Virgin, similarly robed in dark purple, and her Child, also in gold, appear in the Roman fresco flanked protectively by a pair of saints.[7] In this case the saints in question are the Roman martyrs, Sts Felix and Adauctus, whose bodies had been believed since the fourth century to have been interred in the catacomb in which the image can be found. The saints clearly serve as intercessors in the act of presenting the Roman matron, Turtura, whose resting place the image and its inscription commemorate, to Mary and the Christ-Child. Although the angels are absent from the Roman fresco, there is unmistakably a shared iconographical vocabulary between it and the Sinai icon, although it is the Roman image that is generally thought to be earlier (*c.* 530). Common, overwhelmingly, to both the Sinai and Roman images is the hope visibly placed in heavenly intercessors and mediators, whether the truly divine (as with Christ), the saintly, or the angelic.

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[4] For a subtle analysis of this feature, see esp. Cormack (2005). He nevertheless asserts that the Child's eyes directly engage the viewer, but this impression is not shared by the current author. The reader should refer to the enlargement on plate V in Weitzmann (1976) and decide for him- or herself.

[5] See Weitzmann (1976) 4–6, 21.

[6] See Barber (2000) 254, with a colour image of the fresco.

At the centre of the Sinai icon, the infant Christ (the ‘God-Man’) sits as Chief Mediator between God and humankind in the lap of his Mother, the *Theotokos* (‘God-bearer’), increasingly acclaimed as the intercessor *par excellence*, of the imperial city and its rulers. Indeed, the jewelled throne on which the Virgin is seated blurs the distinction between the heavenly and earthly kingdom and suggests instead their fundamental unity, if not identity. Slightly behind the throne stand Sts Theodore and George/Demetrius. Although they, like the angels who in turn stand behind the saints, are only two, they seem representative of the whole army of saints and martyrs that were believed at that time, at least in some quarters, to stand on guard for the Christian empire, and whose ministrations from heaven others plainly questioned. As we have seen Sophronius of Jerusalem affirm when he rebutted an attack on his own sainted patrons, Cyrus and John, ‘[w]ithout the myriads of martyrs watching over us, we would be in danger, deprived of those who intercede with Christ on our behalf through the sprinkling of their own blood.’[8] Both views clearly co-existed in the same society and the Sinai icon seems designed, like Sophronius’s written collection of the saints’ miracles, to ‘commend and not to defame’ (as Sophronius also put it) the miraculous powers and heavenly prerogatives of the saints in their role as patrons of the living. Holding aloft the cross as a sign of victory and, simultaneously if more defensively, as a kind of apotropaic talisman, the saints appear in the Sinai icon as unsleeping guardians; their eyes alone meet those of the viewer. The fixed intensity of that gaze, enhanced by the subsequent warping of the board on which the image was painted, allows the viewer to connect visually with only one saint at a time. Yet this does not diminish the scope or power of the image as a focus for the viewer's prayers. By obliging the viewer's eyes to meet those of one of the saints alone, the viewer is bidden to present his or her supplications to that saint in an act of personal devotion and visual communion, even as the other saint stands ready to receive the prayers of other supplicants, present or absent. The effect of this is a powerful demonstration of the notion, implicit in the apologies of Eustratius and other defenders of the saints, that the needs of the Christian empire's ideal subjects at prayer never exceeded the intercessory resources of its heavenly benefactors. Indeed, by being itself an open window on to the heavenly throne room, a direct portal for approaching the saints whose presence it brought near, the apologetic resources of the icon far exceeded those of contemporary miracle collections, which had to be content with describing the operation of their benefactions after the event.

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[7] Indeed, the parallels go even further. Both images portray the Virgin seated on a red cushion positioned on a jewel-studded, golden throne; both depict the Virgin’s face with a similar pink flush and her shoes in red; and in both images the Christ-Child, turned three-quarters to the viewer, clutches a scroll in one hand. See esp. the detailed excavation report in Deckers *et al.* (1994), Textband 61–5 and Farbtafel 8–13.

[8] *CyrJoh* 29 in Fernandez-Marcos, *Thaumata*, 29.50–2 (Gascou, *Sophrone*, 98): *ἐν κινδύνοις δὲ καὶ ἡμεῖς γενησόμεθα, μὴ μυριάσι μαρτύρων φρουρούμενοι, καὶ ταῖς οἰκείων αἱμάτων προσχύσεσι, ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν τὸν Χριστὸν πρεσβεύοντας ἔχοντες.*

With its orderly representation of the Virgin and Child, saints and angels, the Sinai icon seems thus visually to articulate the ideology of the 'God-guarded' empire under discussion in the conclusion to this study. Although this study is not intended as a work in art history, this image from Sinai cannot go unremarked for it seems so strikingly to render as an image this ideology of saintly intercession for the empire that we have explored so far through textual evidence. We have already noted that the eyes of both Christ and the Virgin turn away from the viewer, while those of the angels register the terror of finding oneself in the presence of God the Father whose hand reaching down from heaven they behold. This aspect, too, of the icon may find an explanation in the debates which this study has traced. This is because, in the visual 'language' of the image it is the saints who thus seem to act as intercessors between the viewer as supplicant and the Virgin and Child as the direct mediators between the divine and human realms.[9] The icon thus recalls, on a visual register, the conclusion to Eustratius's *Life of Golinduch*, where Eustratius as earth-bound priest prayed to the soul of the Persian holy woman now in heaven that she would herself intercede with 'our holy and glorious Lady, Mary, the ever-virgin Mother of God, for the sake of our most pious and Christ-loving emperors and for our most faithful and most Christian government'.[10] While, in the Sinai icon, Christ and the Virgin are seen perhaps already relaying the supplications of the saints to the divine footstool, their gaze is also protective: they appear to scan the horizon for threats, earthly and spiritual, to the peace and prosperity of the Christian empire. Moreover, it is clear that, according to the vision of heavenly intercession on display in this image, prayer is not to be addressed to the angels, who instead appear to remain subordinate to the saints in their role as executors of the divine will, rather as it was argued they were presented in a number of saints' Lives and miracle collections from this period. Indeed, the manner of their rendering, ethereal and nearly transparent, implies that the angels belong properly to another, other-worldly sphere. Yet the power of the message communicated in the icon flows largely from the resulting paradox whereby, through the Incarnation of God from the Virgin and the intercession of the saints, the supernatural and barely apprehended realm of the angels is made accessible to the natural order of the human world here below, if not mystically and consubstantially joined to its rhythms. For, in the background of the icon behind all of the figures there stands the solid wall of an exedra, apparently decorated with a high band of gold-painted stucco reliefs. Recalling the appearance of an audience hall in the imperial palace, this exedra, like the Virgin's throne, conflates the heavenly city and the earthly one, the heavenly palace of God and the throne room of the 'Christ-loving' emperors at Constantinople—a succinct and arresting expression of the 'God-guarded' empire.

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[9] See also Cormack (2005) 170; Barber (2000) 255.

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[10] Eustratius of Constantinople, *V. Gol.* 25 = Papadopoulos-Kerameus, *Ἀνάλεκτα*, 4.173: *ὦ τιμία καὶ ἁγία τοῦ Χριστοῦ μάρτυς, καὶ ἀπαύστως μετὰ ἀγγελικῶν τάξεων καὶ καὶ τῶν δικαίων ψυχῶν δοξολουγοῦσα τὴν ἁγίαν καὶ ζωοποιὸν καὶ ὁμοούσιον καὶ ἀίδιον τριάδα, πρέσβευε καὶ νῦν σὺν τῇ ἁγίᾳ καὶ ἐνδόξῳ δεσποίνῃ ἡμῶν θεοτόκῳ καὶ ἀειπαρθένῳ Μαρίᾳ ὑπὲρ τῶν εὐσεβεστάτων καὶ φιλοχρίστων βασιλέων καὶ τοῦ πιστοτάτου καὶ χριστιανικωτάτου ἡμῶν πολιτεύματος.*

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APPENDIX

Anastasius of Sinai and Pseudo-Athanasius, Question and Answer writers

The *Dialogues*' evidence for debate concerning fundamental church teaching has often seemed anomalous in a purely western context. Alongside contemporary Greek material, however, such a dismissive attitude is, as we have seen, untenable. This appendix seeks to demonstrate the longevity of these debates concerning the soul and the afterlife in the early Byzantine Mediterranean down to *circa* 700. It considers the kind of eschatological reasoning on display in Eustratius of Constantinople's *On the State of Souls after Death* and Gregory the Great's *Dialogues on the Miracles of the Italian Fathers* from the perspective of the Greek Question and Answer collections (ἐρωταπόκρισεις), especially Anastasius of Sinai's seventh-century *Questions and Answers* and the heavily dependent *Questions to the Duke Antiochus* attributed to Pseudo-Athanasius from the early eighth.[1] Both devote considerable attention to the condition of the soul, including that of the saints, *post mortem*, and other related matters. In many ways, Gregory's *Dialogues*, with their dialogue format, anticipated the early Byzantine Question and Answer collections, combining a question and answer structure with hagiographical stories in a striking mingling of *genres*.[2] Yet Eustratius and Gregory adopted a radically different view on the nature of the saints' activity beyond the grave from Anastasius and Pseudo-Athanasius, which was a result of their different outlook on the afterlife. Despite claiming the normativity of their beliefs, Eustratius and Gregory were by no means universally followed among Christian writers in the early medieval period.

In his seminal study on scepticism towards the saints' cult in Byzantium, Gilbert Dagron recognized the striking parallel between the arguments Eustratius rebutted at Constantinople at the end of the sixth century and the opinions of the late seventh-century Christian writer and thinker, Anastasius of Sinai (*c*. 600–700).[3] While Eustratius defended the subjective reality of the saints' miracles *post mortem*, Anastasius believed that these were performed by God or an angel who assumed the saints' physical appearance. Similarly, while Eustratius (and, as we have seen, Gregory) was adamant that the saints' souls entered heaven directly upon the death of their bodies, the monk from Sinai was more equivocal.[4] In his *Questions and Answers*, which Anastasius composed between the Arab conquest of Sinai and the 680s, he preferred to imagine a 'two-part eschatology' that pivoted, and traditionally so, on the Resurrection.[5] Here, Paradise and Hades represented temporary dwellings for the souls of the righteous and unrighteous, respectively, before the Resurrection.[6] Reunited with the body, souls were judged at the Last Judgement, subsequently receiving their full eschatological destiny in either heaven or hell. Confronted with a saints' cult that presupposed the saints' ongoing activity *post mortem*, Anastasius of Sinai, and with him Pseudo-Athanasius, essentially squeezed the saints into their two-part eschatology where, in their view, they clearly belonged.[7]

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[1] On Anastasius, see Haldon (1992). For foundational work on establishing Anastasius's text, see Richard (1969). On dating Pseudo-Athanasius, see Thümmel (1992) 246–52; *pace* Dagron (1992) 63 col. 1. For the place of Question and Answer collections in the wider context of debate literature which proliferated during the sixth and seventh centuries, see Cameron (1991*c*) 106, who takes the view, which is shared here, that this literature ultimately reflects real social tensions and controversies.

[2] Cf. Carozzi (1994) 54: Gregory 'a [. . .] combiné le genre littéraire du dialogue philosophique avec celui de *mirabilia*'.

Anastasius imagined that the body and soul were entirely interdependent.[8] After separation from the body, the soul was inactive and deprived of all bodily faculties until reunion with the body at the Resurrection. He affirmed:

> when the soul departs from the body, it can no longer do any of the things it does through the members of the body—neither speech, nor memory, nor the power to judge matters, nor desire, nor the power to reason or grow angry or to see. Instead, the soul exists in a state of contemplation of itself until such time as, receiving back again the body, its dwelling, immortal, it [the soul] can henceforth exercise the immortal activities in it [the body].[9]

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[3] Dagron (1992) 61–4; cf. Krausmüller (1998–99).

[4] For Anastasius's biography and œuvre, see Haldon (1992) and Flusin (1991).

[5] That is to say that Anastasius's *Hodegos*, a text from the 680s, refers to his *Questions and Answers*: Dagron (1992) n. 34; Flusin (1991) 396 n. 70. The Arab conquest is a constant background to the *Questions and Answers*: Griffith (1987) esp. 352; Flusin (1991) 407–9; cf. Richard (1957). For the text itself, see M. Richard and J. A. Munitiz (eds.), *Anastasii Sinaitae: Quaestiones et responsiones*, CCSG 59 (Turnhout, 2006).

[6] Dagron (1992) 62–3.

[7] Dagron (1992) 62 col. 2 and 63 col. 1.

[8] Munitiz (1999) 50–1; and Krausmüller (1998–99). Aristotelian influence cannot be proved.

[9] Anastasius of Sinai, *Qu. and Ans* 19.5-6 = CCG 59:32: *Οὐκοῦν ὡσαύτως καὶ χωριζομένης αὐτῆς, λέγω δὴ τῆς ψυχῆς, ἐξ ὅλου τοῦ σώματος οὐκέτι δύναται τι ἐνεργεῖν ὧν ἐνήργει, διὰ τῶν μορίων τοῦ σώματος, οὐ λαλεῖν, οὐ μνήσκεσθαι, οὐ διακρίνειν, οὐκ ἐπιθυμεῖν, οὐ λογίζεσθαι, οὐ θυμοῦσθαι, οὐ καθορᾶν, ἀλλ᾽ ἐν συννοίᾳ τινὶ καθ᾽ ἑαυτὴν ὑπάρχει ἀθάνατος διαμένουσα, ἄχρις ἂν πάλιν τὸ οἰκεῖον σῶμα ἀπολαβοῦσα ἄφθαρτον, ἀφθάρτους λοιπὸν καὶ τὰς ἐν αὐτῷ ἐνεργείας ἀποτελῇ.*

Of course, this was very close to the 'soul sleep' of the East Syriac tradition. Anastasius drew the same conclusions from it as did the rationalists at Constantinople at the end of the sixth century: visions of saints at their shrines were not performed in the substance of the saints' souls themselves, but were actually carried out by God or an angel that assumed the saints' appearance.[10] He affirmed:

> It follows then that all the visions of the saints that occur at [their] shrines and tombs take place through the holy angels, by the power of God [. . .]. If you wish to contradict me, tell me, how, being but a single substance, Paul, Peter, or any other apostle or martyr, can be seen in many places at the same time? Not even an angel can be present at the same time in many places; this can be performed by the uncircumscribed God alone.[11]

Such a rationalistic approach to the mechanics of saintly apparitions may reflect the legacy of the medical training which Anastasius has often been imagined to have received, training which, when combined with his view on the posthumous inactivity of the saints, makes it likely the 'philosopher skilled in medicine' (*τις φιλόσοφος καὶ ἰατροσοφιστὴς*) whose alimentary and purgative regime successfully brought about the healing of the sick who had lain in vain at the shrine of St Epiphanius on Cyprus, was none other than Anastasius himself.[12]

While it is conventional to imagine that these views set Anastasius apart from the mainstream of sixth- and seventh-century Christian thinking, he was not alone. The mysterious Pseudo-Athanasius, for one, followed where Anastasius led. 'The visions and apparitions which take place in temples and sepulchres, do not take place through the saints' souls', the latter affirmed, 'but through angels who assume the saints' form. For how, tell me, can the souls of blessed Peter and Paul appear at the same time at [every] shrine and memorial of his, in a thousand temples across the whole world?'[13] He concluded that 'the visions of these [the saints] which some people behold, God reveals for our benefit. For just as a lyre, unless someone plays it, seems vain and useless, so the soul and the body after their mutual separation can do nothing.'[14]

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[10] Dagron (1992) 64 col.2.

[11] Anastasius of Sinai, *Qu. and Ans.* 19.8 = CCG 59:33: *Εἰδέναι μέντοι προσήκει, ὅτι πᾶσαι αἱ ὀπτασίαι αἱ γινόμεναι ἐν τοῖς ναοῖς ἢ σοροῖς τῶν ἁγίων δι᾽ ἀγγέλων ἁγίων επιτελοῦνται κατ᾽ ἐπιτροπὴν Θεοῦ* [. . .]. *Εἰ δὲ ἀντιλέγειν νομίζεις, εἰπέ μοι σύ, πῶς εἷς ὑπάρχων Παῦλος, ἢ Πέτρος, ἢ ἄλλ ος ἀπόστολος, ἢ μάρτυς, κατ᾽ αὐτὴν τὴν ὥραν πολλάκις ἐν πολλοῖς τόποις ὀπτάνεται; Οὔτε γὰρ ἄγγελος δύναται ἐν διαφόροις τόποις ἐν αὐτῇ τῇ ῥοπῇ, ἢ ἐν διαφόροις χώραις εὑρίσκεσθαι, εἰ μὴ μόνος ὁ ἀπερίγραπτος Θεός.*

[12] For Anastasius's origins, see Flusin (1991) 391, 394–5.

[13] Pseudo-Athanasius, *Qu. ad Ant. Duc.* 26 = PG 28:614B: *Αἱ ἐν τοῖς ναοῖς καὶ σωροῖς τῶν ἁγίων γινόμεναι ἐπισκιάσεις καὶ ὀπτασίαι οὐ διὰ τῶν ψυχῶν τῶν ἁγίων γίνονται, ἀλλὰ δι᾽ ἀγγέλων ἁγίων μετασχηματιζομένων εἰς τὸ εἶδος τῶν ἁγίων. Πῶς γὰρ, εἰπέ μοι, μία οὖσα ψυχὴ τοῦ μακαρίου Πέτρου ἢ Παύλου δύναται κατ᾽ αὐτὴν τὴν ῥοπὴν ἐν τῇ μνήμῃ αΰτοῦ ἐπιφανῆναι ἐν χιλίοις ναοῖς αὐτοῦ, ἐν ὅλῳ τῷ κόσμῳ;*

We have already observed that Anastasius was himself a hagiographer and described some of the saints' miracles, performed from 'beyond the grave'. In his *Spiritually Beneficial Tales*, he was nothing if not consistent in ascribing the apparitions of Sinai's sainted fathers to angels that assumed the saints' form.[15] For Anastasius also perceived that the fundamental formlessness of the disembodied soul undermined common hagiographical representations of their miracles. 'How is it possible', Anastasius asked in his *Questions and Answers*, 'before the resurrection of the body, while the saints' bones and flesh are scattered abroad, to recognize these men as if they were already whole, who are often described as armed knights seated on horseback?'[16] As we have seen, Eustratius's opponents raised a very similar objection, one that was also reflected in Stephen Gobar's collection of opposing sentences.[17] Of course, all of this drastically undercut the confidence supplicants could have in the ministrations of whatever particular saint or saints they venerated. Was it not simply more expedient to venerate the angels who carried these tasks out or God on whose behalf they acted?

Yet Anastasius did not reduce the saints to total posthumous inertia. Once separated from the body, Anastasius held that the saints' souls were instead enlivened by the Holy Spirit. This enabled them to enjoy a limited degree of activity towards God, with whom they were able to intercede for the earthbound. 'In my opinion', he wrote, 'souls which possess the Holy Spirit are made like a body and instrument for the sake of the Spirit's manifestation, and are blessed after the death of the body, praising God in their minds and interceding for others [. . .].'[18] They were not, however, able to return here-below and perform miracles on their behalf.[19] Apparently worried that some would suspect his medical training of having led him into ‘heterodoxy’,[20] Anastasius turned to the Old Testament (Ps 145.4, 6.6, 113.25, 102.16), which, he argued, gave little indication that the soul was in any way active before the Resurrection: ‘Lest some believe that I am making up medical tales, listen to the Scriptural teaching on souls’.[21] In a way reminiscent of the East Syrian writers we have seen, Anastasius cited the Psalms’ description of Sheol as proof that ‘souls that have been separated from the body do not see the world’.[22] Sensing the controversial nature of this issue, however, Anastasius presented the subject as open to discussion, explaining to the audience of his *Questions and Answers* that ‘[t]hese matters concerning the soul are said, not dogmatically, nor canonically, but in a friendly manner. As for the rest, let us pray our brothers and teachers in Christ that they might supply what is missing’.[23]

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[14] Pseudo-Athanasius, *Qu. ad Ant. Duc.* 33 = PG 28:617A: *Αἱ γὰρ ὀπτασίαι, ἅς βλέπουσι τινες περὶ τῶν ἐκεῖσε, οἰκονομικῶς ὁ θεὸς ταύτας δείκνυσι πρὸς ὠφέλειαν. Ὥσπερ γὰρ ἡ λύρα, ἐὰν μὴ ἔχῃ τὸν κρούοντα, ἀργὴ ὁρᾶται καὶ ἄπρακτος· οὕτω καὶ ἡ ψυχὴ καὶ τὸ σώμα ἐξ ἀλλήλων χωρισθέντα, οὐδὲν ἐνεργῆτσαι δύναται.*

[15] See above, 233.

[16] Anastasius of Sinai, *Qu. and Ans.* 19.8 = CCG 59:33: *ἐπεὶ πῶς δυνατόν, μήπω τῆς ἀναστάσεως τῶν σωμάτων γεγενημένης, ἀλλ' ἔτι τῶν ὀστῶν καὶ τῶν σαρκῶν τῶν ἁγίων διεσκορπισμένων, εἴδεσθαι τούτους ἤδη ὁλοκλήρους ἄνδρας, πολλάκις εφ' ἵππους καθωπλισμένους ὀπτανομένους;*

[17] Eustratius of Constantinople, *Stat. anim.* = CCG 60:2005–8: *Ἀλλ' ἴσως καὶ ἑτέραν ἀπορίαν ἡμῖν προβάλλονται λέγοντες· "Πῶς αἱ ἀσώματοι ψυχαὶ τῶν ἁγίων πανοπλίαν ἔσθ' ὅτε μὲν καὶ ἑτέρων σχημάτων ἢ ἵππων ἢ ἄλλων τινῶν συμβόλων ἐπιφέρονται, γυμναὶ καὶ ἀσώματοι νῦν τυγχάνουσαι;* Cf. Stephen Gobar §30 = Photius, *Bibliotheca*, cod. 232 in Harnack (1923) 209 = *Photius*, Henry (ed.), vol. 5, 73: *Ὅτι σωματά εἰσι νοερὰ αἱ τῶν ἀνθρώπων ψυχαί, καὶ διατετυπωμέναι κατὰ τὸ φαινόμενον ἔξωθεν τοῦ σώματος σχῆμα· καὶ ἐκ τοῦ ἀντικειμένου, ὅτι ἀσώματός ἐστιν ἡ ψυχὴ καὶ σωματικοῖς οὐχ ὑπόκειται τύποις.*

[18] Anastasius of Sinai, *Qu. and Ans.* 19.7 = CCG 59:33: *αἱ τὸ Πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον κτησάμεναι ψυχαὶ, ὡσανεὶ σῶμα καὶ ὄργανον αὐτοῦ γενάμεναι, ἐμοὶ δοκεῖ, ὅτι διὰ τῆς*

Early Byzantine Question and Answer literature thus reflects the heated nature of the debate on the afterlife in early Byzantium.[24] But the materialist challenge was already long-standing in late antiquity when Eustratius and Gregory rebutted it. As a fifth-century Question and Answer collection, pseudonymously attributed to Justin Martyr, demonstrates, Matt 10.28 was a favourite text for defending the soul’s separability and survival after the death of the body.[25] We read:

> Q: If a man’s blood is not his soul, why does the organism die through a loss of blood? [. . .]
>
> A: Since we have the words of the Creator of the universe distinguishing the soul from the body, people should ask for demonstrations [. . .] worthier than these [words]. [. . .] ‘Do not fear them who kill the body, but who cannot kill the

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ἐλλάμψεως αὐτοῦ καὶ μετὰ θάνατον εὐφραίνονται, καὶ θεὸν λόγῳ νοερῶς δοξολογοῦσι, καὶ ὑπὲρ ἀλλων πρεσβεύουσιν [. . .].

[19] Krausmüller (1998-99).

[20] Dagron (1992) 64 col. 1.

[21] Anastasius of Sinai, *Qu. and Ans.* 19.9 = CCG 59:34: *Καὶ ἵνα μὴ δόξωσι τινες ἰατρικὰς ἡμᾶς μυθολογίας ἀναπλάττειν, ἄκουσον γραφικὰς περὶ ψυχῶν θεολογίας.* Compare ibid., 20.2 = CCG 59:36–7: Ps 15.10; 29.4; 9.18.

[22] Anastasius of Sinai, *Qu. and Ans.* 19.9 = CCG 59:34: *οὐδὲ τὸν κόσμον καθορῶσιν.*

[23] Anastasius of Sinai, *Qu. and Ans.* 21.8 = CCG 59:41: *Ταῦτα διὰ βραχέων ὑμῖν περὶ ψυχῆς, οὐ δογματικῶς, οὐδ’ ὁριστικῶς, ἀλλ’ ἀγαπητικῶς, εἴρηται· τὰ δὲ λείποντα δυσωποῦμεν τοὺς ἐν Χριστῷ ἀδελφοὺς καὶ διδασκάλους τοὺς μεθ’ ἡμᾶς διορθοῦντας ἀναπληρῶσαι.*

[24] On the origins of this ‘genre’ in Byzantine literature, see Bardy (1932) and (1933); also Dörries (1966); and Lim (1995) 36–7 and 68–9.

[25] For brief commentary, see Daley (1991) 117. See now the stimulating discussion in Papadoyannakis (2008).

> soul' (Matt 10.28). This demonstrates that there is something that remains immortal even after a man is taken away and the body dies.[26]

Pseudo-Justin also affirmed that it was 'absurd to say that the blood, which has been shed and been corrupted, is the soul', since 'it is clear that the soul is invisible to men according to its own nature'. These terms resemble the arguments brought by Eustratius's opponents, some of whom alleged a material soul residing in the blood, and Deacon Peter's contention in the fourth dialogue that the *post-mortem* fate of men and beasts was the same.

According to Anastasius of Sinai, '[a]ll men thirst [. . .] to know precisely what man's soul is, what it is like and of what it is made, when and how it operates in the body and where it goes after leaving it'.[27] Anastasius understood that the human soul had been made in God's image and was thus 'incomprehensible [. . .], invisible, inexplicable, untouchable, incorruptible and immortal'.[28] Like Gregory, Anastasius also argued that, because of this, the existence of both God and the soul had to be inferred from their activity in visible things. Just as God 'revealed his own powers and activities through material creatures visible to us', so the unseen soul 'which has been created in his image and which cannot be seen by us [. . .] manifests its activities through the visible body'.[29] Like Eustratius and Gregory, moreover, Anastasius rebutted the materialist argument that equated the human soul with those of animals. He affirmed that '[t]he soul of an animal is the life motion present in the airy spirit in the blood. Since it derives its existence from the elements, it dissolves back into them once the organism dies. But the soul of a man is a discrete substance—rational, immortal and intellectual—that derives its existence not from the elements, but from God.'[30] Recalling

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[26] Pseudo-Justin, *Qu. et Resp. ad Orth.* 68 = PG 6:1310: *E*: *Εἰ μὴ τὸ αἷμα τοὺ ἀνθρώπου ἐστὶν ἡ ψυχὴ, διὰ τὸ ἐκχυθέντος ἐκείνου τὸ ζῶον ἀπόλλυσθαι; A*: *Ἔχοντες τὰς φωνὰς τοῦ Δημιουργοῦ τῆς κτίσεως τὰς διαστελλούσας ψυχὴν σώματος, ἀξιοπιστότερα τούτων ὑποδείγματα* [. . .] *οὐκ ὀφείλουσιν ἀπαιττεῖν.* [. . .] *"Μὴ φοβεῖσθε ἀπὸ τῶν ἀποκτεινόντων τὸ σῶμα, τὴν δὲ ψυχὴν μὴ δυναμένων ἀποκτεῖναι", τοῦτο δηλοῖ τὸ εἶναι τι τοῦ ἀναιρεθέντος ἀνθρώπου τὸ ἐν ἀθανασίᾳ διαμένον καὶ μετὰ τὸν τοῦ σώματος θάνατον.*

[27] Anastasius of Sinai, *Qu. and Ans.* 19 = CCG 59:29–30: *Διψᾶται παρὰ πᾶσιν ἀνθρώποις* [. . .] *τοῦ μαθεῖν καὶ ἀκριβῶς γνῶναι τί ἐστι ψυχὴ ἀνθρώπου, καὶ ποία ἐστί, καὶ πόθεν συνίσταται, καὶ πότε, καὶ πῶς ἐν τῷ σώματι ἐνεργεῖ, καὶ ποῦ μετὰ τὸν χωρισμὸν τοῦ σώματος πορεύεται.*

[28] Anastasius of Sinai, *Qu. and Ans.* 19.3 = CCG 59:31: *ἀκατάληπτος* [. . .], *ἀόρατος, καὶ ἀνερμήνευτος, καὶ ἀψηλάφητος, ἄφθατός τε καὶ ἀθάνατος.*

[29] Anastasius of Sinai, *Qu. and Ans.* 19.4 = CCG 59:31: [. . .] *διὰ τῶν ἐνύλων κτισμάτων τῶν ὁρωμένων ἡμῖν τὰς οἰκείας αὐτοῦ δυνάμεις καὶ ἐνεργείας δείκνυσιν* [. . .]. *οὕτω δὴ καὶ ἡ καὶ' εἰκόνα αὐτοῦ ἀόρατος ἡμῶν ψυχὴ διὰ τοῦ ἰδίου αὐτῆς τοῦ ὁρωμένου σώματος* [. . .] *τὰς οἰκείας ἐμφανίζει ἐνεργείας.*

[30] Anastasius of Sinai, *Qu. and Ans.* 21.6 = CCG 59:41: *ψυχὴ μὲν τοῦ ἀλόγου ἐστὶν ἡ διά τοῦ πνεύματος τοῦ ἀέρος γινομένη ἐν τῷ αἵματι ζωτικὴ κίνησις, ἥτις ἐκ τῶν στοιχείων τὴν ὕπαρξιν ἔχουσα, ἐν αὐτοῖς πάλιν διαλύεται, τοῦ ζῴου θνῄσκοντος:*

Eustratius and Gregory's efforts to overcome the rationalists' objections at Constantinople and Rome (as well as Pseudo-Justin's before), Anastasius also sought to justify the soul's survival *post mortem*. 'Let nobody imagine that', he argued, 'like smoke or cloud, the soul dissolves and is destroyed after death, as with the souls and spirits of beasts. Christ confirmed the soul's substance and immortality with these words: "Do not fear those who can destroy the body but who cannot destroy the soul' (Matt 10.28)."[31]

But Anastasius's doubts about the soul's subsistence *post mortem* seem to have been genuine. Final confirmation for him of the soul's separability after death came through what can only be described as an 'out-of-body' experience:

> Since I called upon God diligently and with great attention that he would make plain to me the nature and condition of the soul once separated from the body, in a dream one night I saw myself in a vineyard. My body was lying separated from me and, after a short interval, lying lifeless. I knew that I was disjoined from the body and that I had a sober mind and understanding.[32]

Anastasius may not have succeeded in 'work[ing] out or recogniz[ing] in what kind of shape or form I existed outside the body'. But he nevertheless 'understood very well that my separated soul had substance and was not a figment of the imagination'.[33] The question was still debated in the early eighth century.[34] Again, Pseudo-Athanasius denied that the human soul was in the blood and any analogy between human and

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ψυχὴ δὲ τοὺ ἀνθρώπου ἐστίν οὐσια ἐνούσιος, λογική, ἀθάνατος, νοερά, οὐκ ἐκ στοιχείων, ἀλλ᾽ ἐκ θεοῦ τὴν ὕπαρξιν ἔχουσα.

[31] Anastasius of Sinai, *Qu. and Ans.* 21.5 = CCG 59:40: *Μὴ γάρ τις νομίσῃ, ὅτι δίκην τινὸς καπνοῦ ἢ νέφους, ἡ ψυχὴ διαλύεται καὶ ἀπόλλυται μετὰ θάνατον, ὥσπερ ἡ τῶν ἀλόγων ψυχὴ καὶ πνοή. Καὶ ἄκουσον τοῦ Χριστοῦ τὸ ἐνυπόστατον καὶ ἀθάνατον τῆς ἡμετέρας ψυχῆς διδάσκοντος καὶ λέγοντος, 'Μὴ φοβηθῆτε ἀπὸ τῶν ἀποκτεννόντων τὸ σῶμα, τὴν δὲ ψυχὴν μὴ δυναμένων ἀποκτεῖναι'.*

[32] Anastasius of Sinai, *Qu. and Ans.* 21.4 = CCG 59:39–40: *Επιμελῶς καὶ ἐμπόνως μου παρακελέσαντος τὸν θεὸν περὶ τῆς διαγωγῆς καὶ καταστάσεως τῆς ψυχῆς τῆς χωριζομένης ἐκ τοῦ σώματος, ἐθεώρουν ἐν ὁράματι τῆς νυκτὸς ἑαυτὸν εἰς ἀμπελῶνά τινα ὑπάρχοντα, τὸ δὲ σῶμά μου κεξωρισμένον ἀπ᾽ ἐμοῦ καὶ ἀπὸ μικροῦ διαστήματος νεκρὸν καίμενον: καὶ ἐγίνωσκον μέν, ὅτι ἐξωρίσθην τοῦ σώματος, καὶ νηφάλεον εἶχον τὸν νοῦν καὶ τὴν φρένα.*

[33] Anastasius of Sinai, *Qu. and Ans.* 21.4 = CCG 59:40: [. . .] *οὐκ ἠδυνήθην* [. . .] *ἐπιγνῶναι ἐν ποίῳ σχήματι ἢ μορφῇ ὑπῆρχον ἐκτὸς τοῦ σώματος, πλὴν ὅτι ἐνυπόστατος καὶ ἀφαντασίαστος ἦν ἡ ἐμὴ τῆς ψυχῆς ὕπαρξις.*

[34] Pseudo-Athanasius, *Qu. Ant. Duc.* 17 = PG 28:607B: *Πόθεν δὲ δῆλον ὅτι ἐν τῷ καιρῷ τοῦ θανάτου οὐ συναποθνήσκει μετὰ τοῦ σώματος ἡ ψυχή; Τινὲς γὰρ οὕτω νομίζουσιν.*

animal souls. Rather, the blood bound the soul to the body's physical elements.[35]

A gulf existed between Anastasius's reticence towards the soul's *post-mortem* activity and Gregory and Eustratius's enthusiasm, a gulf that was rooted in Anastasius's relative eschatological conservatism. According to Anastasius, a preliminary separation of the righteous from the wicked would take place following an individual's death, but this temporary 'triage' did not detract from the primacy of the Last Judgement:

> Q: Where shall we say that souls are now, generally? Are they in the same place?
>
> A: Nobody has ever pronounced anything decisive about this. Nonetheless, from some of Christ's words we learn that the souls of the righteous are with the soul of the Holy Thief in Paradise, or so it seems to me. [. . .] On the other hand, both the Old and New Testaments testify that sinners' souls are sent away to the prison of Hades, as if under watch [. . .].[36]

Whereas Gregory had laid down an innovatory eschatological synthesis predicated upon immediate *post-mortem* judgement, Anastasius allowed much greater ambivalence. Pseudo-Athanasius's attitude was comparable: 'we learn from Scripture that souls of sinners are in Hades, beneath the earth and the sea. [. . .] The souls of the just, however, [. . .] are in Paradise'.[37] While Eustratius and Gregory's eschatology enshrined immediate *post-mortem* judgement of the individual and the immediate entry of souls into heaven or hell, the substance of Anastasius and Pseudo-Athanasius's eschatology remained a separation of souls into 'Paradise' or 'Hades' between death and the Resurrection in anticipation of a final decision regarding an individual's eschatological destiny to be made at the Last Judgement. Like the Good Thief (Luke 23.40–3), penitent souls waited in Paradise, while unrepentant souls lingered in Hades. In both places, however, their activity was limited; and both amounted to less than the full eschatological reality of heaven and hell.[38]

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[35] Cf. Pseudo-Athanasius, *Qu. Ant. Duc.* 135 = PG 28:681C: *Ὅμως ἐπειδὴ ζῶα καὶ ἄνθρωποι τελευτῶσι, πολλάκις καὶ ἄνευ κενώσεως αἵματος, τί ἐστι τὸ παρ' αὐτῶν ἐξερχόμενον καὶ ποιοῦν θάνατον;*

[36] Anastasius of Sinai, *Qu. and Ans.* 20.1–2 = CCG 59:36: *E*: *Ποῦ δὲ ὅλως θέλομεν λέγειν νῦν ὑπάρχειν τὰς ψυχάς, καὶ εἰ ἄρα ἐν τῷ ἅμα πᾶσαι εἰσίν;* *A*: *Οὐδεὶς μὲν ὁ περὶ τούτου σαφθῶς ἀπαγγείλας, ὅμως ἐκ τῶν τοῦ Χριστοῦ λόγων μανθάνομεν, ὅτι αἱ μὲν τῶν δικαίων ψυχαὶ μετὰ τῆς ψυξῆς τοῦ ἁγίου ληστοῦ ἐν τῷ Παραδείσῳ, ὡς ἐμοὶ δοκεῖ, ὑπάρχουσιν.* [. . .] *Πάλιν τε τὰς τῶν ἁμαρτωλῶν ψυχὰς πᾶσα ἡ παλαιὰ καὶ καινὴ Διαθήκη ἐν τῷ Ἅδου δεσμωτηρίῳ παραπέμπεσθαι ὡς ἐν φυλακῇ μαρτυρεῖ* [. . .].

[37] Pseudo-Athanasius, *Qu. ad Ant. Duc.* 19: *ἐκ τῶν Γραφῶν μανθάνομεν, ὅτι αἱ μὲν τῶν ἁμαρτωλῶν ψυχαὶ ἐν τῷ Ἅδῃ ὑπάρχουσιν ὑποκάτω πάσης τῆς γῆς καὶ τῆς θαλάττης εἰσὶν* [. . .], *αἱ δὲ τῶν δικαίων ψυχαὶ* [. . .] *ἐν τῷ Παραδείσῳ ὑπάρχουσιν.*

[38] Dagron (1992) 63 col. 1.

Even when proponents of immediate *post-mortem* judgement proposed the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus (Luke. 16.19–33) as evidence for the entry of souls into heaven and hell before the Resurrection, Anastasius objected that the story should not be read literally. Reminiscent, this time, of the exegesis that Narsai offered at Nisibis in the late fifth century, he argued that:

> nobody will go down into hell or enter the kingdom of heaven until the resurrection of the body. After all, with his body lying in the tomb, what kind of tongue did the Rich Man have to speak with or what kind of water-drop did he need to extinguish the flame? [. . .] How would it be just, since the body and soul either sinned or did righteously together, for the soul to be rewarded or punished before the body?[39]

In other words, writers like Gregory and Eustratius were mistaken precisely because their interpretation told against the true nature of the disembodied soul, erroneously imagining that it retained the body's faculties, which, for Anastasius could not be justified, as we have seen. Pseudo-Athanasius rejected the argument for the same reason. But his audience was clearly aware of the notion of immediate *post-mortem* judgement and the authority which some sought for it in the parable above. 'If [. . .] no one goes either into the kingdom [of heaven] or into hell [before the Resurrection]', they asked, 'what shall we make of the Rich Man and Lazarus, since it is while he is in the fire and torments [of hell] that he speaks to Abraham?'[40]

Anastasius of Sinai and Pseudo-Athanasius demonstrate that even as late as the early 700s, the pressure exerted by the saints' cult upon Christian eschatological doctrine was resisted in some circles. In his *Questions and Answers*, Anastasius seems to have conceived of the *ignis purgatorius* suggested by 1 Co 3.15 not as a means for the expiation of sin between death and the Resurrection, but as a way of explaining how a corruptible soul could be eternally punished *after* the Last Judgement.[41] This interpretation resonated with Anastasius's general disapproval of significant psychological activity before the Resurrection. Pseudo-Athanasius also considered the problem of the intermediate, without venturing to solve it. The fate of those who 'died after having performed both good and bad deeds' (and we might recall the discussion that followed upon the death of Philentelus, the Cypriot ship-owner) was 'known only to God' whose 'judgements are like a great abyss.'[42] In any case, in an eschatological framework still fundamentally orientated towards an inscrutable divine judgement at the end of time, such questions were of less moment. Proponents of the full activity of all human souls *post mortem*, however, neither Gregory nor Eustratius enjoyed the luxury of this ambiguity. But this early Byzantine debate, with its invocation of the same biblical authorities Gregory called on at Rome, is nevertheless (and despite the different interpretation given to those authorities) clearly the context in which an important part of Gregory's belief in mandatory *post-mortem* purgatorial fire for the imperfect must be considered.

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[39] Anastasius of Sinai, *Qu. and Ans.* 21.2 = CCG 59:38: *οὐδεὶς οὔπω οὐδὲ ἐν Γεένῃ, οΰδὲ ἐν βασιλείᾳ εἰσῆλθεν, ἕως τοῦ καιροῦ τῆς τῶν σωμάτων ἀναστάσεως. Τοῦ οὖν σώματος ἐν τῷ τάφπῳ τυγχάνοντος, ποίαν γλῶσσαν εἶχεν ὁ πλούσιος φθεγομένην, ποία δὲ καὶ ῥανὶς ὕδατος ἠδύνατο κατασβέσαι αὐτοῦ τὴν φλόγα;* [. . .] *Ποία γὰρ αὕτη δικαιοσύνη, ἵνα τῆς ψυχῆς καὶ τοῦ σώματος ἐν τῷ ἅμα ἁμαρτησάντων, ἢ κατορθωσάντων, χωρὶς τοῦ σώματος κολασθῇ ἢ στεφανωθῇ ἡ ψυχή;*

[40] Pseudo-Athanasius, *Qu. ad Ant. Duc.* 21 = PG 28:610C: *E*: *Εἰ οὖν οὐδεὶς* [. . .] *οὔτε ἐν βασιλείᾳ, οὔτε ἐν γεένῃ εἰσελήλυθε: πῶς περὶ τοῦ πλουσίου τοῦ κατὰ τὸν Λάζαρον ἀκούομεν, ὅτι, ἐν τῷ πυρὶ καὶ βασάνοις ὑπάρχων, πρὸς τὸν Ἀβραὰμ διελέγετο;*

[41] Anastasius of Sinai, *Qu. and Ans.* 93.3 = CCG 59:149: *Περὶ δὲ τοῦ λέγειν τὸν Ἀπόστολον, ὅτι "Εἴ τινος τὸ ἔργον κατακαήσεται, καὶ ζημιωθήσεται, αὐτὸς δὲ σωθήσεται, οὕτως δὲ ὡς διὰ πυρός"* (1 Co 3.15), *τοῦτο λέγει, ὅτι ἡ μὲν ἁμαρτία ἀπολλυται ἐκεῖ καὶ οὐκέτι ἔσται, ὁ δὲ πράξας αὐτὴν οὐ καθάπερ αὐτὴ ἐξαλείφεται,*

As we have seen, both Eustratius and Gregory also turned to the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus for support of their view of the disembodied soul's retention, beyond the grave, of the perceptive faculties of the body. But again, the authors of the Question and Answer collections argued for a much reduced degree of sense perception on the part of the deceased. To Anastasius of Sinai, it was self-evident that after its separation from the body, the soul could do and feel little as its perceptive faculties relied upon the body's sensory organs. There was more to his argument, however. Divested of differences in height, body shape, skin and hair colour, and so forth, disembodied souls offered nothing to the observer that would provide any basis for distinguishing individual identity. 'How do souls recognize each other there, since they never saw each other naked in this life? For recognition occurs through difference and diverse marks. But no soul has a difference of shape or form to distinguish it from another; instead, an essential, equal likeness belongs to each.'[43] Even if disembodied souls *could* see (which Anastasius thought unlikely), as objects of vision other disembodied souls were formless and wholly undifferentiated—a point that made Gregory and

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ἀλλ᾽ ἄφθαρτος ὑπάρχων σῴζεται ἐν τῷ πυρί, τουτέστι διαμένει καὶ συνίστατι καὶ οὐ φθείρεται ἐν αὐτῷ.

[42] Pseudo-Athanasius, *Qu. ad Ant. Duc.* 133 = PG 28:682AB: *E*: [. . .] *Εἂν οὖν τις καὶ πονηρὰ καὶ ἀγαθὰ ποιήσας τελευτήσῃ, τί χρὴ περὶ αὐτοῦ λογίζεσθαι;* *A*: *Μόνῳ θεῷ ἔγνωσται τοῦτο: ἐπεὶ οὔτε ἀνθρώπῳ οὔτε ἀγγέλῳ. Εἲσὶ γὰρ τινα κακὰ καλύπτοντα μικρὰ ἀγαθά: καὶ εἰσί τινα ἀγαθὰ καλύπτοντα καὶ ἐξαλείφοντα μεγάλα πονηρά. Τὰ δὲ κρίματα ταῦτα "ἄβυσσος πολλή".*

[43] Anastasius of Sinai, *Questions and Answers* 19.10 = CCSG 59:34: *Πῶς δὲ ὅλως ἐκει ἀλλήλας ἀναγνωρίζουσιν αἱ ψυχαί, αἱ μηδέποτε γυμνὰς ἐν τῷ βίῳ τούτῳ ἀλλήλας θεασάμεναι; Ὁ γὰρ ἐπιγνωρισμὸς ἐκ τῆς διαφορᾶς καὶ τῶν συσσήμων τῶν παρηλλαγμένων γίνεται· ψυχὴ δὲ νῦν ἐκεῖ παραλλαγὴν εἴδους ἢ μορφῆς παρὰ τὴν ἑτέραν οὐ κέκτηται, ἀλλὰ πᾶσα οὐσιώδης ὁμοιότης καὶ ἰσότης παρ᾽ αυταῖς.*

Eustratius's notion of the mutual, *post-mortem* recognition of the dead highly problematic. For Anastasius, the inability of the disembodied to recognize subjective identities in the afterlife would obtain even after the reunion of soul and bodies at the Resurrection, as even in the Resurrection there would be equality of bodies. There are 'neither small bodies, nor large bodies, no white or black, no child or aged', but, 'as Adam existed, so will all people rise who have existed since the creation of the world'.[44] But in the Resurrection all would have other faculties to perform this task.

In the early 700s, the highly dependent Pseudo-Athanasius once again endorsed Anastasius's view, again because of the soul's intrinsic reliance upon bodily features for subjective identification: *Ὁ ἐπιγνωρισμὸς ἐκ σωματικῶν σημείων πέφυκε*. Pseudo-Athanasius likened disembodied souls to the indistinguishable appearance of a swarm of bees or a flock of pigeons, 'not one differing from another in dignity or size, but in every respect equal to each other'.[45] Unlike Gregory, moreover, Pseudo-Athanasius did not believe that sinners' souls in Hades recognized each other: on the contrary, the very inability to do so represented part of their punishment.[46] Neither could the damned see the blessed in Paradise.[47] After all, Pseudo-Athanasius reasoned, 'if somebody dwells in darkness, he cannot even recognize his neighbour'.[48] But Pseudo-Athanasius did agree with Gregory that mutual subjective recognition before the Resurrection was part of the saints' special reward, for 'God has conceded this good thing to the souls of the just, that they should recognize each other'.[49] Contrary to Gregory and Eustratius's paradigm, however, the saints' ability to do this was exceptional.

While the Question and Answer authors rejected Gregory and Eustratius's expansive view of the perceptive faculties of disembodied souls, it is important that they addressed the question at all, as this provides a broader context for considering the objections to eschatological doctrine at Rome that

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[44] Anastasius of Sinai, *Qu. and Ans.*89[19.11 = CCG 59:34–5: *Ἀλλ᾽ οὐδὲ μετὰ τὴν ἀνάστασιν ἀλλήλους ἐπιγνωσόμεθα φυσικῷ ἐπιγνωρισῷ: οὐ γὰρ ἔστιν, οὐκ ἔστιν ἐκεῖ σμικρότης καὶ μεγαλειότης σωμάτων, οὐ λευκότης καὶ μελανότης, οὐ νηπιότης καὶ γηραλαιότης, ἀλλ᾽ οἶος γέγονεν ὁ Ἀδάμ, τοιοῦτοι πάντες οἱ ἀπ᾽ αἰῶνος κεκοιμημένοι ἀνιστάμεθα* [. . .].

[45] Pseudo-Athanasius, *Qu. ad Ant. Duc.* 22 = PG 28:611A: *Ὁ ἐπιγνωρισμὸς ἐκ σωματικῶν σημείων πέφυκε. Αἱ δὲ ασώματοι ψυχαὶ ὅμοιοι ἀλλήλαις κατὰ πάντα τρόπον ὑπάρχουσιν, ὥσπερ ἐπὶ πλήθους τινῶν ἀσπίλων καὶ ὁμοίων περιστερῶν ἢ μελισσῶν, οὐ διαφερουσῶν μία τῆς μιᾶς, οὔτε σεμνότητι, οὔτε μεγαλειότητι, ἀλλὰ κατὰ πάντα ἐν ἰσότητι ἀλλήλαις οὔσαις.*

[46] Pseudo-Athanasius, *Qu. ad Ant. Duc.* 22 = PG 28:611A.

[47] Pseudo-Athanasius, *Qu. ad Ant. Duc.* 21 = PG 28:610D.

[48] Pseudo-Athanasius, *Qu. ad Ant. Duc.* 21 = PG 28:610D: *Ἀλλ᾽ οὔτε δὲ πάλιν ἐπιγνώσκει τις τὸν πλησίον αὐτοῦ, ἐκεῖσε ἐν σκότει ὑπάρχων.*

[49] Pseudo-Athanasius, *Qu. ad Ant. Duc.* 22 = PG 28:611A: *Ταῖς γὰρ τῶν δικαίων ψυχαῖς καὶ τοῦτο ὁ θεὸς τὸ ἀγαθὸν, λέγω δὲ τὸν ἐπιγνωρισμὸν, ἐδωρήσατο.*

Gregory recorded in the fourth dialogue. The positive attitude Gregory expressed towards the disembodied soul's sensory capacity did not stem in this sense from a far-fetched imagination, as some would allege, but involved rather a fundamental question of patristic anthropology, namely whether there could be 'intellectual perception without a material substrate'.[50] For Gregory, like Eustratius, answering this positively was inextricably tied up with the requirements of the saints' cult, and the impact which the latter exerted on the development of Christian views of the afterlife in the early medieval period should be acknowledged.[51] In this sense, Gregory's fourth dialogue must not be read as a collection of randomly chosen eschatological topics illustrated with colourful, if not garish, stories that display the credulity of his audience and the barbarity of his age. Rather, in their (relatively) systematic treatment of many of the same problems, the seventh-century Question and Answers writers (and Anastasius of Sinai, in particular) demonstrate just how far Gregory's discussion of the afterlife represented an attempt to engage with a range of interrelated questions about the fate of men and women *post mortem*, which a contemporary debate about the nature and propriety of the saints' cult had made urgent. This remains true however much they ultimately arrived at different solutions.

The rival interpretations these various authors made of the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus offer a case in point. 'If the deceased do not recognize each other, how did the Rich Man recognize and entreat Abraham and Lazarus?', Anastasius was asked. His reply reflected the different hermeneutical approach we have seen before: 'From this whole story of the Rich Man and Lazarus, we learn that Christ created this narrative to be understood figuratively as a parable, not as a record of real events'.[52] Naturally, this converged with Anastasius's view of the saints' limited activity *post mortem* and the real responsibility of God or angels for their miracles and apparitions. Exemplified in competing interpretations of Luke 16.19–31, we may observe that, in this debate about the afterlife that appears to have shifted back and forth across the early Byzantine Mediterranean between *circa* 575 and 700, what determined a writer's view of the dead was not geographical location ('east' or 'west') or linguistic allegiance (Greek or Latin) but their relative enthusiasm for the saints' cult, especially the plenitude or otherwise of the saints' activity *post mortem*.[53]

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[50] See Constas (2001) 98, discussing Gregory of Nyssa's (335–94) response to this problem.

[51] See esp. van Uytfanghe (1991).

[52] Anastasius of Sinai, *Qu. and Ans.* 21.1 = CCG 59:38: *E*: *Εἰ οὐκ ἐπιγινώσκουσιν ἀλλήλους οἱ ἀπελθόντες ἐκεῖ, πῶς ὁ πλούσιος ἐπέγνω καὶ ἐδυσώπει τὸν Ἀβραὰμ καὶ τὸν Λάζαρον* [. . .]; *A*: *Διὰ πάντων τῶν κατὰ τὸν πλούσιον καὶ τὸν Λάζαρον μανθάνομεν, ὅτι παραβολικῶς καὶ τυπικῶς, ἀλλ' οὐ πραγματικῶς ὁ Χριστὸς τὴν διήγησιν ἐκείνην ἀνεπλάσατο*. Pseudo-Athanasius concurred: Pseudo-Athanasius, *Qu. ad Ant. Duc.* 21 = PG 28:610C.

As we have seen, both Eustratius and Gregory concluded their apology for the ongoing activity of saints' souls *post mortem* with a defence of the efficacy of the church's ritual care of the dead, especially the offering of the Eucharist on their behalf. The question also attracted Anastasius of Sinai' attention. Anastasius wrote:

> Q: Some doubt saying that the dead obtain no benefit from the Masses that are offered for them.
>
> A: Concerning this, I shall tell you, not what I, but what the apostolic father, Dionysius the Areopagite says: 'If the deceased person's sins are slight and meagre, he will receive profit from the Masses offered on his behalf [. . .]; if, however, they are serious and heavy, God has shut himself off from him'. Only we must think of our own souls, and put no hope in the oblations that may be offered for us after death by others.[54]

Pseudo-Athanasius thought similarly:

> Q: What then? Do the souls of sinners obtain no benefit from the Masses, offerings and oblations made for them?
>
> A: Unless some obtained benefit from this, no mention would be made of them in the oblation. [. . .]. [. . .] the souls of sinners obtain some benefit from the immaculate sacrifice and offering made for them, as only our God, the Ruler of the living and the dead, knows and commands.[55]

The Question and Answer writers maintained the legitimacy of the Mass as a ritual practice, but it is clear that they did so without offering a ringing endorsement of its powers after Eustratius or Gregory's manner. Certainly, Anastasius did not reject the offerings made for the dead; but neither did he defend the custom in his own voice, instead upholding its propriety out of obedience to a (supposed) apostolic father. As he prioritized the soul's dependence upon the body, Anastasius's psychology was naturally difficult to reconcile to the kind of ongoing psychological activity *post mortem* that prayer for the dead was often perceived to pre-suppose. Anastasius preferred, therefore, to emphasize what a believer could do in this life to prepare for the life to come: Πλὴν δεῖ ἡμᾶς φροντίζειν τῶν ἰδίων ψυχῶν, καὶ μὴ ἐλπίζειν μετὰ θάνατον δι' ἀλλοτρίων συγχωρεῖσθαι προσφορῶν. The same was true for Pseudo-Athanasius, whose relative ambivalence towards the care of the dead, which essentially amounted to committing the deceased to God's unsearchable wisdom, can also be understood in the context of his assertion of the soul's *post-mortem* inactivity before the Resurrection. Again, the diversity of opinion regarding this matter across the early Byzantine Mediterranean contextualizes Gregory and Eustratius's apologies, even as it relativizes the normativity of their own responses.

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[53] Given his view of the inactivity of souls before the Resurrection, it is unsurprising that the East Syrian ('Nestorian') theologian, Narsai of Nisibis († after 503), also considered Luke 16.19–33 as speaking figuratively: Narsai of Nisibis, *Homily on the Rich Man and Lazarus* 96–7 in *Narsaï: Cinq homélies sur les paraboles évangéliques*, E. Pataq Siman (ed. and trans.) (Paris, 1984), 47. Abraham spoke not 'in reality', but 'in thought': *Homily* 181 = Pataq Siman, *Narsai*, 53. See above, 269–70.

[54] Anastasius of Sinai, *Qu. and Ans.* 42 = CCG 59:96 *E*: *Ἀμφιβάλλουσι τινες λέγοντες, ὅτι "Οὐδὲν ὠφελοῦνται οἱ νεκροὶ ἐκ τῶν συνάξεων τῶν γινομένων ὑπὲρ αὐτῶν". A*: *Περὶ τούτου ἐρῶ σοι λόγον οὐκ ἐμόν, ἀλλὰ τοῦ ἀποστολικοῦ πατρὸς Διονοσίου τοῦ Ἀρεοπαγίτου*: *οὗτός φησιν* [. . .]: *"Εἰ μὲν ψιλά τινα καὶ εὐτελῆ τυγχάνουσι τὰ τοῦ τετελευτηκότος ἁμαρτήματα, προσλαμβάνεται τινα ὠφέλειαν ἐκ τῶν ὑπὲρ αὐτοῦ ἐπιτελουμένων συνάξεων*: *εἰ δὲ βαρέα καὶ χαλεπά εἴσι, συνέκλεισε κατ' αὐτοῦ ὁ θεός". Πλὴν δεῖ ἡμᾶς φροντίζειν τῶν ἰδίων ψυχῶν, καὶ μὴ ἐλπίζειν μετὰ θάνατον δι' ἀλλοτρίων συγχωρεῖσθαι προσφορῶν.*

[55] Pseudo-Athanasius, *Qu. ad Ant. Duc.* 34 = PG 28:617AB: *E*: *Τί οὖν; οὐκ αἰσθάνονταί τινος εὐεργεσίας καὶ αἱ τῶν ἁμαρτωλῶν ψυχαὶ, γινομένων ὑπὲρ αὐτῶν συνάξεων καὶ εὐποιῶν προσφορῶν; A*: *Εἰ μή τινες εὐεργεσίας μετεῖχον ἐκ τούτου, οὐκ ἂν ἐν τῇ προσκομιδῇ ἐμνημονεύοντο.* [. . .]. [. . .] *τὰς τῶν ἁμαρτωλῶν ψυχὰς μετέχειν εὐεργεσίας τινὸς ἐκ τῆς ὑπὲρ αὐτῶν γενομένης ἀναιμάκτου θυσίας καὶ εὐποιίας, ὡς μόνος ἐπίσταται καὶ κελεύει ὁ ζώντων καὶ νεκρῶν ἐξουσιαστὴς καὶ θεὸς ἡμῶν.*

Nevertheless, we should not forget that Gregory himself affirmed that: 'The safer course naturally is to do for ourselves during life what we hope others will do for us after death. [. . .] We need to sacrifice ourselves to God in a sincere immolation of the heart whenever we offer Mass, because we who celebrate the mysteries of the Lord's passion ought to imitate what we are enacting. The sacrifice will truly be offered to God for us when we present ourselves as the victim.'[56] It is no coincidence that at the end of a dialogue illumined by comparison with Eustratius and the Question and Answer writers, and containing so much that constituted the subject of real dissent in the intellectual climate of the later sixth and seventh centuries, Gregory should close with an indictment of the sin of discord and an appeal to fraternal reconciliation. Were such reconciliation to take place, Gregory could conclude, '[t]hen we can be sure that, if we offered ourselves during life as victims to God, we will not need to have the saving Victim offered for us after death'.[57] Reflecting the heated debates of his age, Gregory seems to have agreed with Anastasius that if only Christians observed humility towards one another and the Church's inherited tradition, there would be no need to pray for the dead at all.

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[56] Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 4.60.1–61.1 (SC 265:200–2): *Inter haec autem pensandum est quod tutior uia sit, ut bonum quod quisque post mortem suam sperat agi per alios, agat dum uiuit ipse pro se. [. . .] Sed necesse est ut, cum hoc agimus, nosmetipsos Deo in cordis contritione mactemus, quia qui passionis dominicae mysteria celebramus, debemus imitari quod agimus. Tunc uero pro nobis Deo hostia erit, cum ipsos hostiam fecerit.*

[57] Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 4.62.3 (SC 265:206): *et fidenter dico quia salutari hostia post mortem non indigebimus, si ante mortem Deo hostia ipsi fuerimus.*

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Abbreviations

CCG	Corpus Christianorum series Graeca
CCL	Corpus Christianorum series Latina
CSEL	Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum
CSCO	Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium
PG	Patrologia Graeca
PL	Patrologia Latina
PO	Patrologia Orientalis
SC	Sources Chrétiennes
Settimane	Settimane di Studio del Centro italiano di Studi sull'alto Medioevo

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